

FROM CLASSROOM TEACHER TO TEACHER

LEADER: A CASE STUDY

By

SARAH DANETTE VANN

Bachelor of Science in Science Education
Northeastern State University
Tahlequah, Oklahoma
2002

Master of Science in Educational Technology
Oklahoma State University
Tulsa, Oklahoma
2011

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
December, 2021

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Dissertation Approved:

Dr. Katherine Curry

Dissertation Adviser

Dr. Ed Harris

Dr. Shawna Richardson

Dr. Susan Stansberry

Name: SARAH VANN

Date of Degree: DECEMBER, 2021

Title of Study: FROM CLASSROOM TEACHER TO TEACHER LEADER: A CASE
STUDY

Major Field: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Abstract: This qualitative comparative case study focused on two groups of teacher-leaders: one that participated in teacher leadership development training and one group that has not. The setting for this study was looking at two groups of instructional specialist in a large suburban district. Getzels-Guba Social Systems Models is the theoretical framework used to frame the results of this study. Findings suggested that teacher leadership development training influenced how teacher leaders who participated in training reacted to barriers and interacted with the teachers they serve within this case study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Leadership is a construct that influences almost every aspect of life. Whether a student in the classroom or an executive in the workforce, leaders are ever-present and can influence their environment accordingly. Emphasis on leadership is quintessential in educational systems because most decisions regarding schools, policies, and practices are made by upper administration at the state and district levels (Maxcy, 2009; Peck & Reitzug, 2014). Additionally, with the inception of the high stakes accountability movement in 2001, passage of *No Child Left Behind* (2001) and, subsequently, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (2015)—the Federal government has significantly influenced school reform. The resulting environment has been the impetus for teacher burnout, as well as significant struggle for novice teachers (Brown, 2015). Consequently, educational leaders have been pressured to make decisions that greatly impact a school’s climate (Gonzalez et al., 2017).

High-stakes testing, unfunded educational mandates, and tight budgets have steered administrators to make decisions that directly affect teachers and their classrooms. The qualitative findings of Gonzalez et al. (2017) showed “teachers’ self-efficacy levels were influenced by the demands of high-stakes testing” (p. 526).

Administrators, at times, make decisions without gaining input from essential stakeholders while also placing a significant number of tasks on teachers (Gonzalez et al., 2017). This practice has resulted in many unintended consequences, as it creates a tumultuous climate within many districts across the country. McCombs and Miller (2009) described the result of these factors as, “what began as an effort to create a culture of achievement for all has resulted instead in a culture in which achievement has been subverted, leaving the teacher and school leaders weary and demoralized” (p. 13). This type of culture is difficult to work within, and many people associated with the educational and political system are calling for change (Gonzalez et al., 2017).

Historically, change within an educational system has been a top-down process, where decisions made at the central office or by building-level administrators are made without teacher input and enforced within the classroom (Maxcy, 2009). However, educational leaders and scholars are beginning to question the efficacy of heavy-handed, hierarchical leadership (Bottery, 2003; Maxcy, 2009; Peck & Reitzug, 2014). This type of shift has necessitated a change in the way individuals perceive leadership and the individuals who serve as leaders in their buildings. As a result, teacher leadership has gained recognition as an important component of school reform (Nguyen & Hunter, 2018). Teacher leaders can be tapped into as a valuable resource because they are the individuals in a school situated the most closely to classroom instruction. However, if teacher leadership goes unrecognized (i.e., if they are viewed as “just a teacher”), subsequently their talents and knowledge become pushed to the side, and their ability to facilitate change within the school system is overlooked (Helterbran, 2010).

Teacher leadership is a type of reform that has gained attention in the literature. Teachers are in the educational trenches and know first-hand the many issues surrounding students in the classroom. The emphasis on teacher leadership is an opportunity to reform schools differently, which starts with putting teachers in leadership roles. Teachers can be empowered to lead the change within the educational system, keeping the focus on the individual learners, because that is what teachers do daily. Teachers are considered instructional experts, and they feel empowered when they are a part of making decisions within the educational system (Easley, 2016; Nguyen & Hunter, 2018; Peck & Reitzug, 2014).

Many states have begun to include teachers in important decision-making processes, including developing standards and assessment practices. In Oklahoma, teachers and representatives from higher education, career technology, and science help develop and identify specific content standards for each grade level (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2014). State leaders have developed programs where teachers from across the state come together to develop resources and help guide other teachers. There are social media groups such as #OkSci on Facebook, where teachers collaborate on the digital platform and discuss best practices, successes, and failures in the classroom. The teachers involved in these decisions are invested in the process, and the impact of those decisions reach far beyond their classrooms.

The recognition that teacher leaders can impact student learning is becoming evident by the teacher leader's ability to spark conversations, increase interaction among teachers, and constantly bring best practices to the table. Because of teachers' important contributions, an increase in the student-learning environment is expected (Struyve et al., 2014). A

paradigm shift associated with how leadership is structured could change the way decisions are made. The emphasis on teacher leadership has the potential to expand the understanding of how to address educational challenges at the classroom level, where student learning takes place.

Problem Statement

School systems are under a great deal of pressure to improve (Maxcy, 2009; Peck & Reitzug, 2014). Research indicates empowering teachers to become leaders is one way districts can enact positive change within their systems (Ferris-Berg, 2014). However, the development of teacher leaders into effective change agents is successful in some instances (Angelle & Teague, 2014; Nguyen & Hunter, 2018; Struyve, Meredith, & Gielen, 2014; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) but not in others (Goodwin, 2013; Helterbran, 2010). One reason teacher leadership may not be successful is, while teachers tend to be natural leaders within their classrooms, they often encounter obstacles and barriers when they attempt to step into leadership roles to influence others outside their classrooms (Helterbran, 2010; Nguyen & Hunter, 2018; Warren, 2016). Research supports this contention by finding teachers often have a difficult time believing they are truly leaders, and this perception can impact the development of their leadership skills and a lack of confidence in their leadership ability (Klein et al., 2018; Sinha, et al., 2012) to effect meaningful change. One way to address this lack of confidence in leadership ability is to train teachers to become teacher leaders; however, research is needed to discover additional insight to the influence of this training regarding teacher efficacy to assume teacher leadership roles (Gerstenschlager & Barlow, 2016).

Purpose Statement

Given the importance of teacher leadership in implementing change (Ferris-Berg, 2014), a greater understanding is needed of teacher perceptions of factors that influence their willingness to step into the teacher leader role and of factors that influence their success once they accept the challenge of becoming a teacher leader. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of teacher leader perceptions of the influence of leadership training between three teachers who have received training prior to becoming an instructional leader and three who have not. Additionally, this study seeks to understand differences in perceptions of leadership roles between those who have had training and those who have not. Because the Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model explains how roles and expectations within an institution assist in meeting the respective goals of the organization, this model will be used to explain how teacher leaders perceive their roles within the educational system.

Research Questions

This comparative case study focused on two groups of teacher-leaders: one group, consisting of three teachers, that participated in teacher leadership development programs and one group, consisting of three teachers, that has not.

Overarching Question

Are there differences in the manifestation of teacher leadership between those who have experienced leadership training and those who have not?

1. In each group, how is teacher-leadership manifested?
2. In each group, how do teachers perceive their roles and expectations as teacher-leaders?

3. In each group, what obstacles have teacher leaders experienced and how have they addressed those challenges?
4. In each group, how has training or lack of training influenced teacher leader perceptions of their role?
5. How does the Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model explain the above research questions?

Epistemological Perspective

Constructivism is the epistemological perspective used to drive this study. Creswell (2014) explained that researchers with this perspective “often address the processes of interaction among individuals” and “focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural setting of the participants” (p. 8). In this study, teachers shared ideas, beliefs, perceptions, and experiences about human practices within the educational world.

The development of teacher leaders flows from the constructivist philosophy. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe this philosophy as “how people construct knowledge or make meaning” (p. 206). Crotty (1998) describes constructivism as a social process where interactions with other individuals shape how people learn and interpret the meaning of that learning. As a teacher is becoming a teacher leader, it does not occur in isolation, but many different social interactions are involved in the process. Understanding how teachers perceive and interpret the process of becoming a teacher leader could influence further teacher-leader developmental efforts.

Creswell (2014) explained that the constructivism perspective is “typically seen as an approach to qualitative research” (p. 8). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state, “qualitative

researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5). Teachers have a variety of experiences and cultures in which they are immersed daily. Teacher leaders are emerging and attempting to enact change in the public school system (Nguyen & Hunter, 2018). Guba and Lincoln (1994) described the role of the constructivist researcher as the “orchestrator and facilitator of the inquiry process” (p. 114). Through the inquiry process, the hope is to understand the perceptions of teacher leaders and how they develop capacity to become leaders within the educational system. The results of this study could assist in the future development of teacher leaders within the social system of educational institutions.

Theoretical Framework

Getzels and Guba (1957) developed the Social Systems Model to conceptualize social behavior and administrative processes. The Getzels and Guba Social Systems Model theorizes there are two main parts to every social system, namely institutions and individuals. They further divide social behavior within a system into two parts—*nomothetic* and *ideographic*. Getzels and Guba (1957) described this as, “institution, role, and expectation, which together constitute the *nomothetic*, or normative, dimension of activity in a social system; and individual, personality, and need-disposition, which together constitute the *ideographic*, or personal, dimension of activity in a social system (p. 424). Institutions are made up of roles and expectations that assist in meeting the respective goals of the institutions (Getzels & Guba, 1957). There are five generalizations Getzels and Guba (1957) made in regards to the nature of roles;

- Roles are tied to positions and/or titles;
- Roles have expectations;

- Roles are appointed by the institutions;
- Roles are associated with a continuum of behaviors;
- Roles are complementary;

Figure 1 shows the interrelationship of institutions (i.e., *nomothetic* dimension) and individuals (i.e., *idiographic* dimension). The figure offers insight into the interactions between the two dimensions and illuminates how teachers perceive their ability to become teacher leaders and assume their role within the social system.

Figure 1

Interrelationship Between Nomothetic and Idiographic Dimensions

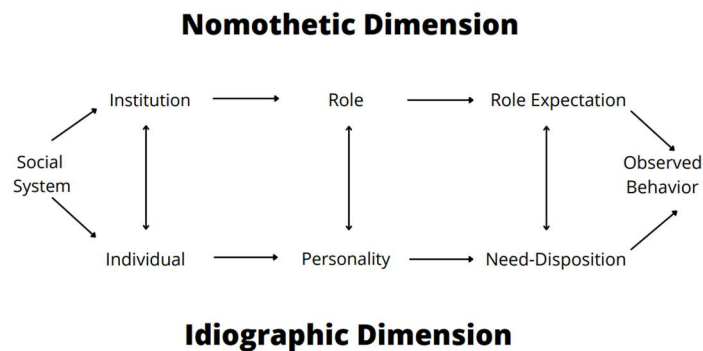


Figure 1. Adapted from Getzels and Guba’s original model (1957) “General model showing the nomothetic and idiographic dimensions of social behavior” (Getzels & Guba, 1957, p. 429).

Methodological Procedures

The design used for this study is a comparative case study. Creswell (2014) described case studies as “an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (p. 14). Patton (2002) explained that case study approaches are

used when “individuals or groups are the primary unit of analysis (p. 439). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) outlined comparative case studies as “collecting and analyzing data from several cases and can be distinguished from the single case study that may have subunits or subcases embedded within” (p. 39). This study focused on the teacher leaders who have participated in teacher leadership development programs and teacher leaders who have not. The epistemological perspective of constructivism supports the methodology of comparative case study used to develop this study. This study focused on the transformation of teachers into teacher leaders and how their perceptions of leadership varied with either the presence or absence of teacher leadership training.

Purposive sampling was used in selecting the participants of this study. Erlandson et al. (1993) concluded that purposive sampling “increases the range of data exposed and maximizes the researcher’s ability to identify emerging themes that take adequate account of contextual and cultural norms” (p. 82). Participants included three teacher leaders who have participated in teacher leadership training or leadership development program and are currently serving in a formal teacher leadership role, and three teacher leaders who were not a part of any training or leadership development program and are currently serving in a formal teacher leadership role.

Interviews and observations were conducted in order to collect data for this comparative case study. Furthermore, documents and artifacts also provided other sources of data. A significant portion of the data came from an initial interview and a follow-up interview using the photo-elicitation method. Photo-elicitation is “the most popular form of visual methods currently in use across the social sciences” (Rose, 2016, pg. 318). This method was used to empower participants to view teacher leadership differently and think

deeper about the topic of teacher leadership (Rose, 2016). Participants were also observed during meetings, professional development, or any type of collaboration with other teachers or administrators. The documents that were collected included emails giving input into decisions, professional development presentations, or any certificate of training they have attended. The artifacts collected in this study were the photos or images participants brought to the second interview, which will be described in detail in Chapter III. Creswell (2014) described several key characteristics of qualitative data collection, such as it occurs in a “natural setting,” the “researcher is the instrument used to collect data,” and “multiple sources of data” are utilized (p. 185). All interviews were conducted within the natural setting, and I collected and analyzed all data.

Significance of the Study

Significance to Practice

Teachers are the center of the educational system. They spend countless hours implementing standards, following accommodations, communicating with parents, guiding students, and working to prepare them for the future. Teachers have a unique perspective regarding the improvement of the educational system. They can be a vital part of reform efforts when encouraged to step into the leadership role, as their sole focus is student learning (Sinha, et al., 2012). Teacher leaders can use the central focus of student learning and mold reforms from the inside out. The results of this study could be helpful to state-level leadership, superintendents, district-level curriculum coordinators, principals, and other teacher leaders as they look to empower future teacher leaders. Identifying best practices associated with the development of teacher leaders could be instrumental in the proper

development of teacher leaders to the extent that other states and districts could adopt a similar model to develop teacher leaders.

Significance to Research

This study aims to identify differences in how teacher leaders perceive their leadership abilities and characteristics between those who have participated in a program designed to encourage teacher leadership and those who have not. Research suggests the majority of teachers “who take on leadership roles do not see themselves as leaders, reserving the term *leader* for those who take on formal roles such as principals or district supervisors” (Angelle & DeHart, 2011, p. 143). This study can be significant to research by identifying common self-perceptions of teacher leaders, and how they view their role within the educational system. The findings could also help further define what teacher leaders are capable of accomplishing within the educational system. Further research could be conducted concerning the impacts of newly identified teacher leaders and the reaching effects of teacher leaders on school reform.

Significance to Theory

This study could be significant to theory by understanding how the role of a teacher leader is shaped within the institutions of the education system. Getzels and Guba (1957) described the development of their social model made it “possible for the administrator to understand why certain decisions and practices work while others do not” (p. 441). By investigating the role of the teacher leader within the education system, there could be new nuances discovered within the theoretical model developed by Getzels and Guba in 1957.

Definitions of Terms

Teacher Leader. Katzenmeyer and Moller's (2001) definition of teacher leadership: teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; influence others toward improved educational practice; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership (p. 6).

Teacher Leadership Training. For the purpose of this study, teacher leadership training refers to any training that emphasizes teacher leadership ability beyond content-specific professional development. It specifically targets leadership skills, including how to communicate effectively with other teachers, solve problems, find creative solutions, and empower them to take an active role within their schools, districts, and beyond.

Idiographic Dimension. Getzels and Guba (1957) describe the personal dimension of activity within a social system that includes an individual, personality, and need-disposition, constituting the *idiographic* dimension (p. 424). For the purpose of this study, teacher leaders are the individuals within the educational institutions, but each teacher leader will have a specific personality and need-disposition.

Nomothetic Dimension. Getzels and Guba (1957) describe this dimension as "institution, role, and expectation, which together constitute the *nomothetic*, or normative, dimension of activity in a social system (p. 424). For the purpose of this study, the school district will be the institution and will frame the role and expectation of the teacher leader.

Summary and Organization of the Study

This comparative case study is composed of five chapters. Chapter I introduces the study and includes the problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions,

significance of the study, epistemological perspective, theoretical framework, methodological procedures, and definition of terms. Chapter II provides an in depth review of the literature surround teacher leadership. Chapter III discusses the methodology of the study. In order to understand teacher's perception of becoming teacher-leaders, a case study methodology is used to study teachers who have gone through some form of teacher leadership development program and those who have not but have been identified as a teacher leader. The epistemological perspective of constructivism used to develop this study supports the methodology of the comparative case study. The Getzels and Guba Social Systems Model will be used as the theoretical framework to analyze the interrelationship between institutions and individuals. It can provide insight into how teachers perceive their ability to become teacher leaders and their role within their social system. Chapter IV begins with a presentation of the data, discusses the findings, and answers each research question individually as well as answering the overarching research question. Finally, Chapter V provides a thorough discussion of the findings through the theoretical framework, as well as comparing the findings to what was found in the literature. It gives implications of the research as well as recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Teachers are the backbone of school districts across the United States—masters of their specific grade-level content and tireless managers of student learning and well-being. As leaders of the learning environment within their classrooms, teachers collaborate with their students throughout the year to facilitate learning, foster creativity, and problem solve. Teacher leadership within the classroom allows teachers to guide students in their learning and provides students opportunities to explore new and different concepts (Lambert, 2003).

Over the last 30 years, teacher leadership has been a fluid part of the education system. Teachers are at the focal point of how schools function and are part of crucial decision-making about the academic direction of the school (Warren, 2016). York-Barr and Duke (2004) explained, “teacher leadership roles range from assisting with the management of schools to evaluating educational initiatives and facilitating professional learning communities” (p. 1). Although teacher leadership is evolving, teachers' perceptions of themselves as leaders have yet to be uncovered.

This literature review highlights research focusing on teacher leadership. It begins with the foundations of teacher leadership, which includes the historical

foundations, an evolving definition, and a summary of current development programs. The next section examines research-based realizations of empowering teachers as leaders—looking at barriers and successes found within the literature. Finally, this chapter explores key characteristics surrounding teacher leaders, assesses how school culture affects teacher leadership, and provides a thorough description of the Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model, which serves as the theoretical lens for the study reported herein.

Foundations of Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership has been a subject of investigation for over four decades, becoming a predominant topic within academic literature that focuses on school reform. This section is devoted to reporting on the historical progression, an emerging definition, and mounting training found within teacher leadership research.

History of Teacher Leadership

For many years, the teaching profession was an isolated and egalitarian culture, which proved to be the main hindrance for teachers becoming leaders (Berry et al., 2005; Nguyen & Hunter, 2018; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Starting in the 1980s, however, a new concept of teacher professionalism was introduced—one which placed teachers at the center of improvement efforts regarding teacher quality, teaching conditions, and core functions of learning; because of this perspective, they could lead the way to enact change (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, pp. 1 and 2). This movement was the first step in putting teachers at the heart of school reform. Berry et al. (2005) expounded, claiming, “teacher professionalism is the clearest and most powerful path to improving schools and closing the achievement gap” (p. 59). Many within the education system envision reform

occurring in a top-down fashion, wherein administration makes decisions and pushes them down to the classroom level. Ferris-Berg (2014) reiterated this belief, stating that most people believe, “a teacher’s job must be to implement and support whatever federal, state, and district leaders decide” (p. 31). Teachers are, in fact, in the educational trenches and know first-hand the many issues surrounding students in the classroom. Their position offers an opportunity to envision school reform differently, starting with placing teachers in leadership roles. There is growing interest in the potential impact of teacher leaders and the importance of advancing this line of research (Nguyen & Hunter, 2018; Sinha et al., 2012; Thronton, 2010). Given that teachers learn to embrace leadership opportunities and favorable pre-existing conditions exist, ongoing reform efforts could become more fruitful (Nguyen & Hunter, 2018). Authentic teacher leaders are expected to spark change, ensuring reform efforts genuinely take root in the system (Sinha et al., 2012).

Early teacher leadership research studies were primarily qualitative with small sample size (Harris et al., 2019; York-Barr & Duke 2004). However, an ever increasing amount of quantitative studies are utilizing a variety of instruments toward identifying teacher leaders. For example, the Teacher Leadership Inventory (TLI) is “designed to measure the extent of teacher leadership in schools” (Angelle & DeHart, 2011, p. 148-149). The test provides a quantitative measure for identifying teacher leader characteristics, which could serve as the basis for additional research. Coupled with quantitative research studies, the growing attention makes teacher leadership promising for the educational system. Consequently, teacher leaders can be utilized as a valuable resource instead of merely as “just a teacher,” wherein their talents and knowledge are

pushed to the side and their ability to facilitate change within the school system is overlooked (Helterbran, 2010).

Meaning of Teacher Leadership

Teacher leaders are gradually becoming recognized as active leaders, serving as change agents within the education system. While the concept of teacher leader has been singularly defined by some authors, a widely agreed upon definition of “teacher leadership” has yet to be recognized (Angelle and DeHart, 2011; Danielson, 2006, Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Struyve et al., 2014). One challenge surrounding the ever-evolving definition is that its conceptualization might be influenced by the variety of school districts throughout the nation (Nguyen & Hunter, 2018). The term “teacher leadership” might also indicate small modifications according to how a teacher leader role was initiated. Many teachers are motivated on their own to step into a leadership role by making extra effort to learn new skills, and then turn around and help others learn the same skills. These teachers embody Katzenmeyer and Moller’s (2001) notion of teacher leadership: “teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; influence others toward improved educational practice; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership” (p. 6). Alternatively, when teachers are assigned or mandated to accept a leadership role, the nuances of the definition change. For example, Struyve, et al (2014) suggest that teacher leaders are, “teachers who, in addition to their classroom duties receive, sometimes only temporarily, a formal mandate to carry out leadership responsibilities by guiding other teachers toward improved education practice” (p. 206).

Although clearly defining the term “teacher leader/leadership” remains allusive, the role itself is often discussed in literature. Gigante and Firestone (2008) distinguished teacher leaders by examining their tasks, namely ‘support tasks,’ in which teacher leaders help their colleagues in small, temporary ways vs. ‘developmental tasks,’ in which teacher leaders assist colleagues in lasting ways (e.g., learning best practices and improving instruction). Best practices could include anything from classroom management and organization to methods for enhancing the instructional setting by increasing depth of knowledge questions for students. The role of teacher leaders has frequently been divided into formal and informal categories (Angelle & Dehart; 2011; Angelle & Teague, 2014; Berry et al., 2005; Chen, 2020; Fountas & Pinnell, 2020; Goodwin, 2013; Helterbran, 2010; Struyve, et al., 2014; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Formal roles encompass teachers with official titles, such as curriculum director (York-Barr & Duke, 2004), committee/team leader (Berry et al., 2005) or department head, in which teachers take on managerial duties to maximize efficiency in their department (Angelle & Dehart, 2011; Gigante & Firestone, 2008; Helterbran, 2010; Struyve et al., 2014; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) or informal roles involve teachers who aim to change the profession's culture (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). These teacher leaders look for opportunities outside their classroom, and then share their experiences with teachers in their buildings through professional discourse, influencing colleagues to adjust their instructional practice (Angelle & Teague, 2014; Struyve et al., 2014) . Sometimes informal teacher leadership is “self-generated” and occurs when “a teacher sees a need or identifies a problem and takes the reins to address it within his or her means” (Helterbran, 2010, p. 365). More recently, hybrid teacher leaders or “teacherpreneurs” have been

identified (Hunzicker, 2017). Hybrid teacher leaders split their day between managing their own classroom and facilitating the learning of teacher colleagues. Although such positions are limited within the education system, they are beginning to appear as a suitable blend of formal and informal teacher leadership roles. Technically, Hunzicker (2017) would categorize the role as formal teacher leadership.

Development of Teacher Leaders

The process of purposely developing teacher leaders is an emergent concept. Teacher leaders rise up from various phases in their educational careers—anywhere along the spectrum from novice to experienced teachers (Cheng & Szeto, 2016). One trend is the influence of administrators' development of teacher leaders. Teacher leaders can progress from two different avenues: “they can develop their leadership capacity through principal-delegated and/or self-initiated professional development opportunities” (Cheng & Szeto, 2016, p. 147). Using principals to develop teachers is one way to increase teacher leadership (Klein et al., 2018). This occurs when principals share leadership decisions with teacher leaders and “seem to depend upon interweaving roles of the teacher and the principal” (Cheng & Szeto, 2016, p. 141). In this scenario, a principal is purposeful in “communicating clear visions and strategic intent, incorporating others’ ideas, and making space for individual teachers’ innovations are essential principal practices for developing teacher leadership” (Cheng & Szeto, 2016, p. 141).

Another method for developing teacher leaders is purposeful and specific professional development. Sinha and Hanuscin (2017) conducted a multiple-case study on a professional development program for science teachers tasked with implementing a

new course. Training focused on helping teachers view themselves as teacher leaders.

“According to current research, several factors play a key role in the identity formation of leaders, such as leadership vision, leadership roles and practices, and the importance of feedback recognition, and reflection” (Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017, p. 357). The authors used the following six strategies (p. 358):

- Explicit focus on teacher leadership
- Common vision of teacher leadership
- Opportunities to lead
- Feedback and recognition
- Reflection on growth as teacher leaders
- Sustained support for teacher leadership development

Several findings were essential to understanding how teacher leaders grew through the professional development program. Sinha and Hanuscin (2017) explained further:

Teachers expand their scope of leadership practices as they develop as leaders; newer teachers, compared to veterans, tend to start leading within the classroom and then transition to leading outside the classroom; and teacher leadership trajectories depend on the priorities of the teacher and her/his context (p. 367).

Sinha and Hanuscin (2017) developed a visual model (See Figure 2.1), which scholars can use to develop additional programs geared toward developing teacher leaders.

Figure 2.1

Teacher Leadership Development Process

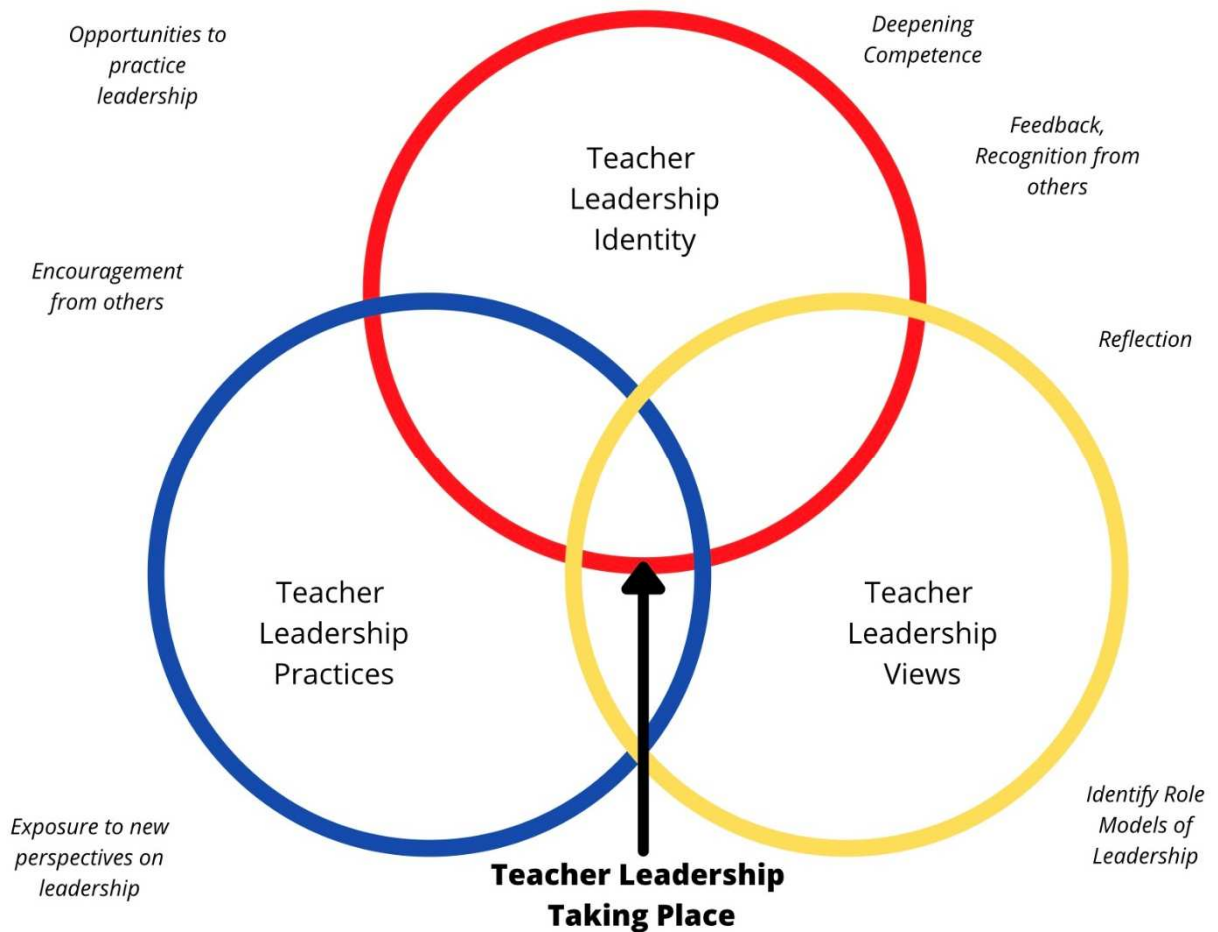


Figure 2.1 Adapted from Sinha and Hanuscin’s model (2017). Shows teacher leadership occurs when views and practices are aligned and supported by the actions listed outside the circles (Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017, p. 369).

Gerstenschlager and Barlow (2019) reported a single case study investigating a teacher moving into a teacher leadership role, which included providing professional development to other teachers and assessing the readiness factor of teachers filling the role. The study found that both internal and external factors can impact teacher development into a teacher leader. A primary factor is lack of leadership training. This more recent research is an excellent foundation for our journey to understanding the optimal direction to guide teachers into becoming teacher leaders. Nonetheless, there is

much more to uncover about the teacher leader developmental process (Gerstenschlager & Barlow, 2019; Klein et al., 2019; Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017).

Research-based Realizations of Empowering Teachers as Leaders

Researchers have studied teacher leaders over the past 40 years, identifying barriers, successes, and effects in various contexts.

Research-based Barriers of Teacher Leadership

Although many positive aspects associated with teacher leadership have been reported, some barriers persist, including negative attitudes from teachers toward teacher leaders within a school system. Recall that for many years the teaching culture was characterized as an isolated and egalitarian profession. This hindered teachers becoming leaders (Berry et al., 2005; Goodwin, 2013; Nguyen & Hunter, 2018; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Admittedly, this widely recognized old school mentality is difficult to overcome and can be the basis of feelings of resentment toward teacher leaders because they are trying to change the traditional way of operating (Nguyen & Hunter, 2018). The education system is extremely bureaucratic by nature and tends to resist anything that goes against the status quo (Helterbran, 2010). This bureaucratic thinking is highly pervasive among teachers and is the source of bitter feelings when teacher leaders begin to arise. York-Barr and Duke (2004) explained relationships with other teachers can be strained due to a change in teacher leader responsibilities. Fairman and Mackenzie (2015) discovered that many teachers did not “want to put themselves in any kind of hierarchical relationship to their colleagues,” because of what other teachers might think (p. 78). Some teachers might believe a teacher leader was selected based on “favoritism, not capability” (Helterbran, 2010, p. 367). The result is teacher leader advice not being

respected or even entertained by classroom teachers, which affects how teacher leaders view themselves. Struyve et al. (2014) affirmed that teacher leaders “report on how they struggle in obtaining recognition for their expertise and responsibilities by their teacher colleagues and how this all has an impact on their self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, task perception and future perspective” (p. 230). In spite of negativity, teacher leaders must keep a healthy perspective concerning interactions with unenthusiastic teachers. Because this group of educators more than likely has no desire to become teacher leaders, they simply remain resentful of the opportunity afforded to teacher leaders (Helterbran, 2010).

Teacher leadership has obvious barriers within the current education system, which can manifest in teachers becoming easily discouraged and causing them to second-guess their aspirations to be a leader (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Stress associated with being a teacher leader is unavoidable, given the many obstacles they must endure. Teacher leaders must look beyond the obstacles and focus on the end goal of improving student achievement. Helterbran (2010) advised that, “identifying and overcoming barriers is an essential component in encouraging and supporting teachers in their quest to share leadership” (p. 367). To increase the probability of being successful, teacher leaders must begin their journey fully aware that the path will not always be easy to navigate, although the likely outcomes will be worth the struggle. Angell and Teague (2014) explained that, “teachers can be given the power to lead, but they must be willing to accept the responsibilities this power brings” (p. 9). If teachers are better trained and more effectively prepared to assume teacher leadership opportunities, they will tend to be

more willing to accept the teacher leader role and serve as a voice of change within their school and district (Klein et al., 2019).

Researched-based Successes of Teacher Leadership

“It is no surprise that teacher leadership is at the heart of the high leadership capacity school” (Lambert, 2003, pg. 32). The foremost aspiration of teacher leaders is improving the student learning environment. Interestingly, this desire is not limited to their respective schools; it typically envelopes students within their district, state, and the national level. Struyve et al. (2014) described teacher leadership as a local endeavor or leadership activity that reaches beyond the local organization. Ferris-Berg (2014, p. 32) confirmed this notion, concluding that, “expanding our concept of teacher leadership might be key to transforming K-12 teaching and learning” (p. 32.). Teacher leaders spark conversations, increase interaction among teachers, and constantly bring best practices to the table. The result is an expected increase in the student-learning environment (Struyve et al., 2014).

Students are not the only individual who benefit from the effort of teacher leaders. Perhaps “the strongest effects of teacher leadership have been on the teacher leaders themselves” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 20). When teachers become empowered to become leaders, their work has more meaning not only for themselves, but also for teachers who surround them. Leadership inspires teachers to encourage collaboration, halt the egalitarian culture pervasive in many schools, and share lessons learned and experiences (Guiney, 2001).

Teacher leaders are able to impact the type of professional development delivered in their district, making it more targeted, and, in return, more visibly valuable and

impactful. This influence will increase leadership acceptance and application within classroom instruction (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Effective professional development leads “to a long-term gain in teachers’ knowledge” (Gigante & Firestone, 2008, p. 311), which, in turn, makes considerable impact on both the classroom and the teacher. Danielson (2006) illustrated this thought, explaining that, “professional development is the cornerstone of improving practice and is essential to teacher growth, expertise, and skill development” (p. 15).

When teachers unite and embrace true collaboration alongside teacher leaders then extensive improvement to the school is likely to occur. When describing what school improvement looks like under strong collaboration with teacher leadership, Angelle and Teague (2014) pointed out that there is a “clear and strong relationship between collective efficacy and the extent of teacher leadership” (p. 7). If teacher leaders can discover approaches to encourage their colleagues to get on board, they will enjoy the benefit of seeing change begin. Likewise, teachers in the school will begin to see the value of joining the group rather than isolating.

Teacher Leader Attributes and Skills

Teachers hold a variety of perceptions regarding attributes of a leader. Many teachers have the skills and knowledge to become valuable teacher leaders. However, even with research showing the impact of such leaders, many teachers haven’t realized their potential in this area (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015; Helterbran, 2010). Possible reasons might be an “old school” mentality in which teachers believe they should work in isolation or that a school’s culture discourages teachers from emerging (Berry et al., 2005; Goodwin, 2013; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Helterbran (2010) stated the

materialization of teacher leaders “cannot and will not occur unless and until teachers recognize their own leadership potential and develop the confidence and skills to be effective teacher leaders” (p. 365). Helterbran (2010) further stated the first step in the process of emerging as a teacher leader is challenging the egalitarian culture and offering opportunities to collaborate with other teachers. Once collaboration has occurred, teacher leaders must build their confidence and find opportunities to become a better teacher and share their experiences with colleagues in an effort to gain their trust. Once this is achieved, teacher leaders will have the ability to influence those colleagues and possibly change the way they view the teaching process (Warren, 2016).

Several attributes of teacher leaders are discussed within the literature. Ferris-Berg (2014) compiled a list of characteristics teacher leaders displayed while working with other teachers. These include

- Accept ownership,
- innovate,
- share purpose,
- collaborate,
- lead effectively,
- function as learners,
- avoid insularity,
- engage and motivate one another and students, and
- asses performance. (Ferris-Berg, 2014, pp. 34-35)

The authors developed this list after reviewing research that focused on highly effective schools. They also considered teacher surveys administered at the same schools. The list

exemplifies the ways in which multifaceted teacher leadership can be accomplished effectively.

Rogus (1988) outlined recommendations for how to conceptualize teacher leadership and improve teacher outcomes. These areas were used to develop a framework that identified leadership characteristics, including

- Demonstrating skills of effective instruction
- demonstrating an inquiry orientation to teaching,
- working with others,
- creating community,
- leading curriculum review and improvement,
- articulating and communicating vision,
- fostering ownership among peers for programs,
- empowering self and others,
- developing political support for change, and
- demonstrating patience and persistence. (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 278)

The verbs within the areas for development provide evidence that teacher leadership is an active, engaging, and meaningful process—not simply setting meetings, managing supplies, and mandating responsibility.

Student learning is at the heart of motivating teacher leaders in their quest to help other teachers within their own schools, districts, states, and beyond (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015). Not everyone exhibits the same passion that drives teachers to become leaders. Lambert (2003) characterized a teacher leader as “a person in whom the dream of making a difference has been kept alive, or has been reawakened by engaging

colleagues and a professional culture” (p. 422). “Teacher leaders have developed a confidence and belief in what they are doing as a school community and share their successes through advocating for their work and for their profession” (Petersen & Conway, 2011, p. 179). The skills, traits, and characteristics suggested in the literature can guide educational leaders in identifying possible candidates to become teacher leaders, and, in turn, these new leaders can effectively tackle the problems occurring in the classroom and positively impact student learning.

School Culture and Teacher Leadership

Identifying ways to improve schools in order to increase student learning and achievement is at the heart of schools desiring to change. Many reforms have been driven by reports, like *A Nation at Risk* (1983), and legislation, such as No Child Left Behind (2001), which mandates school improvements and sets lofty goals for schools (Maxcy, 2009; Peck & Reitzug, 2014). “Successive waves of reform—systemic intensification, restructuring, and performance monitoring—[have been] enacted to improve performance, increase responsiveness, and reestablish public confidence” (Maxcy, 2009, p. 490). Behind every reform is a leader or group of leaders driving how their district and schools will enact the reform process. Two predominant perspectives about how to accomplish this prevail. The first is driving reforms via the hierarchical, “top-down” approach. The second is utilizing teachers as leaders, wherein these individuals play an active role in deciding which changes are made and how they are implemented. Both reform methods influence school culture, which is addressed in the following section.

Administrator's Influence on Teacher Leadership

In an era of accountability in which schools are held to a standard and outcomes are customarily measured by standardized tests, administrators overwhelmingly initiate needed change (Gonzalez, 2017; Maxcy, 2009; Peck & Reitzug, 2014). Often, the changes are significant. Such reforms have pushed some administrators to initiate a managerial approach, like mandating lists of changes (Bottery, 2003; Maxcy 2009). Peck and Reitzug (2014) believed this type of leadership is because “the federal government’s turnaround policy places the principal in an almost iconic position as the individual fundamentally responsible for school success or failure” (p. 49). Accordingly, many administrators have been forced to take control and, at times, make a ‘one-size-fits-all’ decision without consulting school district stakeholders regarding the changes. Easley (2016) described this hierarchical perspective as the “centralization of practice for instructional leadership” (p. 51). Such an approach can jeopardize teacher buy-in and impact the implementation of changes (Bottery, 2003). Roby (2011) ranked trust between teachers and administrators as the second highest concern of factors influencing school culture and the ability to make meaningful changes.

Some scholars have suggested that teachers must step into an administrative role if they desire to become a true leader. For example, Warren (2016) regularly insisted that people within an educational system perceive a leader role can be held solely by administrators, and that many tasks performed by administrators are not performed by teachers. This belief has been bolstered by the fact that time and again, “administration in the contemporary world is observed as a role that can be played solely by persons with training or skills in administrative practice” (Warren, 2016, p. 514). In other words,

without specific training, teacher leaders are unable to fill the crucial role of a change agent.

Alternatively, administrators could play a significant role in fostering teacher leadership and enlist this group to help with school reform. For example, Helterbran (2010) insisted that a school principal is a key factor in determining if teacher leaders will become effective within a school. In fact, it is essential to have a school culture orchestrated by the principal who encourages teacher leaders. “Developing culture is one of the most challenging aspects in the implementation of teacher leadership” (Demir, 2015, p. 623). One method is ensuring that the principal a supportive mentor and encourages teachers. “Empowering teachers, assigning them responsibilities, encouraging their successes, and appreciating their successes are all extremely important” (Barth as cited by Demir, 2015, p. 625). If principals accept this charge, they will begin to build the trust of their teachers, which eventually could encourage teachers to accept leadership roles.

Teacher Leadership Cultivated by School Culture

School districts across the United States are vastly different. Various aspects of school culture have been well documented in the literature. “Teacher leadership capacity in any school building is a melding of support and encouragement by the principal and the willingness of teachers to impact their own professional vocation” (Helterbran, 2010, p. 366). Klein et al. (2018) found this concept to be true after conducting a study focusing on teacher leadership, from which they concluded “we are now preparing to invite school principals into our fellowship program so that they can collaborate with the fellows and strategize the best way to harness their synergy, lending more insight and transparency to

the role of teacher leadership in the district” (p. 110). Teacher leaders can play an active role in building a school culture of continual improvement. They “have the potential to influence the culture of the school, and this can be dramatic” (Roby, 2011, p. 788).

Teacher leaders are developing partnerships in the trenches alongside teachers they are leading. A substantial part of teacher leadership occurs when teachers informally identify an issue and take action steps to fix it, many times seeking input from other teachers in the process (Helterbran, 2010). Simply stated, “leadership in teachers is characterized by a particular type of relationship- one that mobilized others to improve practice” (Sinha et al., 2012, p. 13). When teachers unite and embrace true collaboration alongside teacher leaders, then they “can play a critical role in designing, adapting, and implementing school reform” (Nguyen & Hunter, 2018, pg. 562). When addressing what school improvement looks like under strong collaboration with teacher leadership, there is a “clear and strong relationship between collective efficacy and the extent of teacher leadership” (Angelle & Teague, 2014, p. 7). Fairman and Mackenzie (2015) further described this collective efficacy as “teacher actively leading other adults in that we say leadership activity occurring within teachers’ individual classrooms and through the information interactions and relationships among teacher, where teachers were leading with others” (p. 63). If teacher leaders can find a way to form a consensus among their colleagues, they will be able to see change begin; and teachers in the school will begin to see value in not remaining isolated. While there are challenges of building those trusting relationships, there are “positive results that occurred once they were established” (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015, p. 69).

Although it seems likely that everyone within an education system would want to see teacher leadership increase, this isn't always the case. Since teachers are in the daily educational trenches, this transformation should not be assumed an easy task. Goodwin (2013) reminds us that teacher leadership is “an appealing common sense idea that, despite its seeming promise of creating a different kind of teacher, is by no means guaranteed to succeed” (p. 78). Notably, however, determining a method for cultivating teacher leadership could be a pathway to change the “social-professional dynamics in school” (Struyve et al., 2014, p. 209), which, in turn, could improve the culture of the school.

Theoretical Framework

Getzels-Guba Social Systems

Getzels and Guba (1957) developed the Social Systems Model to conceptualize social behavior and the administrative process. Chapter I of this dissertation introduced using the model as the theoretical framework for the study reported herein. The authors clarified that the term “Social System” conceptualizes a community and the working parts of that community. Thus, the educational system as a whole, or the working part of a single district, can be considered a “Social System” under this framework.

The Getzels and Guba Social Systems Model identifies two main parts to every social system: institutions and individuals. They further divide social behavior within a system in two ways: “institution, role, and expectation, which together constitute the *nomothetic*, or normative, dimension of activity in a social system; and individual, personality, and need-disposition, which together constitute the *idiographic*, or personal, dimension of activity in a social system” (Getzels & Guba, 1957, p. 424). Institutions are

made up of roles and expectations that assist in meeting the respective goals of the institutions (Getzels & Guba, 1957). Five generalizations describe the nature of roles:

- Roles are tied to positions and/or titles
- Roles have expectations
- Roles are appointed by the institutions
- Roles are associated with a continuum of behaviors
- Roles are complementary

Figure 2.2 shows the interrelationship of institutions (i.e., *nomothetic* dimension) and individuals (i.e., *idiographic* dimension) who can provide insight to how teachers perceive their ability to become teacher leaders, as well as the role they play within their Social System.

Figure 2.2

Interrelationship Between Nomothetic and Idiographic Dimensions Model

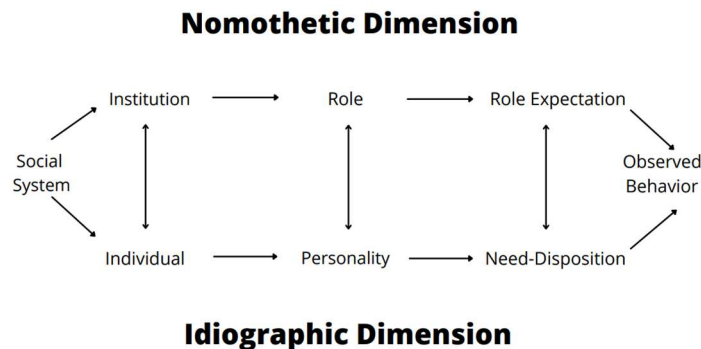


Figure 2.2 Adapted from Getzels and Guba (1957). “General model showing the nomothetic and idiographic dimensions of social behavior” (Getzels & Guba, 1957, p. 429).

Institution within Social Systems

Getzels and Guba (1957) highlighted the fact that in order to understand how institutions and individuals are related, then one must understand the intricacies of both parts. Although the term “institution” has been given a variety of definitions, Getzels and Guba’s (1957) theory identified several characteristics all institutions have in common. The first characteristic is that institutions are *purposive*, which means they have a specific end goal by which they are ultimately held accountable (Getzels & Guba, 1957, p. 425). The next characteristic is that institutions are *peopled*, which the authors described as “human agents” (or “actors”) (p. 425) who are used to meet a specific goal. Getzels and Guba (1957) made this distinction because the personality of the individual is not the focus. Rather, humans are utilized to fill this role. The personalities of the individuals are addressed in the *ideographic* domain of the framework.

Institutions are also *structural*, which means there is a specific organization to the institution; within that organization, *roles* are created (Getzels & Guba, 1957). The next characteristic is that institutions are *normative*, which means there are normal behaviors and tasks associated within each institution according to the assigned roles of the actors within the institution (Getzels & Guba, 1957). Finally, institutions are characterized as *sanction-bearing*, which hold the actors accountable to their roles. Getzels and Guba (1957) provided further clarification, saying, “the existence of norms is of no consequence unless there is adherence to them... institutions must have at their disposal appropriate positive and negative sanctions for ensuring compliance with the norms” (p. 426).

Roles as the Foundation to Institutions

Getzels and Guba identified roles as essential for how institutions function. “This hierarchy of relationships is the locus for allocating and integrating roles, personnel, and facilities to achieve the goals of the system” Getzels & Guba, 1957, p. 424). This is evident within the education system today; it is widely known how the roles of teachers, administrators, and support staff have been identified and interpreted in current school districts. Earlier in this chapter, Getzels and Guba (1957) were identified as providing a description of these roles, informing they are within the *nomothetic* dimension of the framework. It was also mentioned that the personality (or *ideographic*) dimension of “actors” filling the role is not considered in this dimension of the framework. Getzels and Guba (1957) defined roles as “the structural elements defining the behavior of the role incumbents or actors” (p. 426). They provided generalizations surrounding roles.

Roles have “*positions, offices, or statutes*”; each comes with *role expectations*, which were described as “normative rights and duties” (Getzels & Guba, 1957, p. 426). . Expectations are specific to the assigned role and outline what each actor should accomplish in their specific role. These can be used to judge if an actor is performing his/her duties effectively. Another generalization made by Getzels and Guba (1957) about roles within institutions is that there are *institutional givens* surrounding roles. Role expectations are formulated without thinking of the *ideographic* dimension; thus, the *institutional givens* surrounding roles create a “blueprint for what should be done” within that particular role (Getzels & Guba, 1957, p. 426). Getzels and Guba (1957) also informed roles are associated with a continuum of behaviors that fall between *required and prohibited*, which allow individuals with different personalities to fulfill the

same role by allowing them to personalize it. The role of a teacher within the educational system is a perfect example of this generalization, because teachers work under this continuum of behaviors and each teacher has a unique personality or flare he/she brings to their classroom and is part of his/her teaching style. The final generalization Getzels and Guba (1957) discussed is that roles are *complementary*; in other words, “roles are interdependent in that each role derives its meaning from other related roles in the institution” (p. 427). This aspect of roles assists in the understanding of an institution’s structure and the hierarchical setting many institutions exhibit (Getzels & Guba, 1957). How superintendents, principals, and teachers interact contributes to how *complementary* their roles within the system are.

Individuals within Social Systems

Thus far, the only aspect of the Getzels and Guba Social Systems Model discussed has been the *nomothetic*, or, as Getzels and Guba (1957) described it, a “normative dimension of activity within a social system” (p. 424). To truly understand how social systems work, the *idiographic*, or “individualizing aspects of social behavior” is equally important (Getzels & Guba, 1957, p. 427). This aspect of the theoretical framework allows a researcher to step outside the lens of the structure and function of institutions and instead look for how individuals cause fluidity within institutions and their roles.

Getzels and Guba (1957) identified two component elements of the *ideographic* dimension of this framework, namely *personality* and *need-disposition*. These must be acknowledged, because no two people act exactly the same. This affects the way in which institutions function. *Personality* is defined as “the dynamic organization within the

individual of those *need-dispositions* that govern his[/her] unique reactions to the environment” (Getzels & Guba, 1957, p. 428). *Need-dispositions* is defined as “individual tendencies to orient and act with respect to objects in certain manners and to expect certain consequences from these actions” (Getzels & Guba, 1957, p. 428). The authors elaborated on *need-dispositions*, saying, “needs and expectations may both be thought of as motives for behavior, one deriving from personal propensities, the other from institutional requirements” (p. 428). The interrelationship of the *ideographic* and *nomothetic* dimensions is the intersection for social behavior, and the connection can provide a framework for institutional effectiveness.

Applying Getzels and Guba’s Social Systems Model

The Getzels and Guba Social Systems Model has been used as the theoretical framework in numerous dissertations within the educational field and many within the nursing field (Hanford, 2016; Hoy, 1982; McLeod, 2000; Park, 2006; Sutton, 2020; Willower, 1960). The theory was used in order to help explain the interrelationship between the structure of the institutions and the people filling the roles of those respective institutions. Several of the dissertations had a heavy focus on the roles of individuals and the qualitative aspect of those roles within their institutions (McLeod, 2000; Park, 2006; Sutton, 2020), which is an important aspect of a social system. Getzels and Guba’s (1957) model would be an excellent model to use when looking at the educational system and the interrelationship between the administration and teachers in a school district.

The comparative case study detailed in this dissertation examined two groups of teacher leaders: three who have experienced training focused on teacher leadership and

three who have not. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that such a theoretical framework is “the underlying structure, the scaffolding or frame of your study” (p. 85). Getzels and Guba’s (1957) model further defined the structure by emphasizing that it is important to consider the environment in which teacher leaders serve. Teacher leaders are part of a Social System, which comprises the district and building in which they serve, as well as the individual characteristics of individual teacher leaders. This theoretical framework provided a unique analysis of teacher leaders, not only as individuals, but also as a part of an institution. Using Getzels and Guba (1957) theory to analyze the interrelationship between the *ideographic* and *nomothetic* dimensions within their particular Social System provided a lens for analyzing research findings of this study.

Summary

The literature review for this dissertation contained many dimensions of teacher leadership. Although a widely accepted definition of teacher leadership is still evolving, additional research provides a greater sense of what teacher leadership entails. Teacher leaders can be identified in many ways. Their roles can determine the type of leadership in which the teacher will take part. The historical foundation of teacher leadership is relatively brief; however its popularity has steadily increased over the past ten years. What has been recognized as an “old school” culture is beginning to loosen its grip on our school systems, leaving an environment conducive for teacher leaders to emerge.

In this section, the research-based realizations of empowering teachers as leaders were outlined, and many barriers were identified. Becoming a teacher leader is not an

easy path to travel; however, the positive effects on teachers and students typically outweigh the negatives. The way in which school culture is impacted by teacher leader development was also discussed. A connection was made within the literature that school culture played a role in the successful development of teacher leaders.

How teachers perceive themselves as leaders was a major aspect discussed throughout this literature review. More research is needed to understand how teacher leaders build a capacity for teacher leadership (Harris et al., 2019) Teachers' perceptions and realizations they have about themselves as they transform into teacher leaders can be valuable information as educators look toward developing additional change agents within the educational system.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

William Bruce Cameron (1967) stated, “not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted” (Cameron, p. 13, 1967). This describes my use of qualitative research to conduct this study, because there is only so much one can learn from numbers, and at times information cannot be quantified. Creswell (2014) describes qualitative research as “an approach for exploring the understanding and meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 4). Merriam (2015) describes a case as “a bounded system, the unit of analysis—to be investigated” (p. 98). The design of qualitative case study will provide an understanding of the perceptions of teacher leaders in different scenarios. Yazan (2015) discussed the popularity of using qualitative case study methodology in social science research, and this design is selected for this study due to the humanistic aspect of teacher leadership.

Problem Statement

Keeping up with the ever-changing environment in the educational system is challenging. Federal and State laws are constantly shifting, and new mandates are handed down on a consistent basis providing distinct challenges as districts attempt to navigate these changes effectively and efficiently. One way to meet the challenges

of a constantly changing system is to empower teacher leaders as change agents within the educational system. While being a teacher leader is not always easy, and teachers can experience personal and professional barriers, the challenge to overcome these barriers is important. The potential impact teacher leadership can have on overall student learning and their ability to make the educational environment productive and efficient is important to examine. Obtaining a greater understanding of the journey teachers take to becoming teacher leaders has the potential to benefit education, and ultimate students will benefit from this knowledge (Angelle & Teague, 2014; Gigante & Firestone, 2008;).

Purpose Statement

Given the importance of teacher leadership in implementing change (Ferris-Berg, 2014), a greater understanding is needed of teacher perceptions of factors that influence their willingness to step into the teacher leader role and of factors that influence their success once they accept the challenge of becoming a teacher leader. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of teacher leader perceptions of the influence of leadership training between three teachers who have received training prior to becoming an instructional leader and three who have not. Additionally, this study seeks to understand differences in perceptions of leadership roles between those who have had training and those who have not. Because the Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model explains how roles and expectations within an institution assist in meeting the respective goals of the organization, this model will be used to explain how teacher leaders perceive their roles within the educational system.

Research Questions

Overarching Question

Are there differences in the manifestation of teacher leadership between those who have experienced training and those who have not?

1. In each group, how is teacher-leadership manifested?
2. In each group, how do teachers perceive their roles and expectations as teacher-leaders?
3. In each group, what obstacles have teacher leaders experienced and how have they addressed those challenges?
4. In each group, how has training or lack of training influenced teacher leader perceptions of their role?
5. How does the Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model explain the above?

Researcher's Role

Researcher's Bias

Creswell (2014) described the researcher's role in qualitative research as "typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants" (p. 187), and because of this relational experience, there could be bias introduced into the study. I have participated in a variety of teacher leadership programs during my years in education. I was a part of the Oklahoma State Department of Education's Master Teacher Program for two years. This program provided professional development to teachers and then expected them to take the knowledge and skill acquired back to their districts and share with other teachers in their content area. The program also required

Master Teachers to conduct book studies with teachers in their district as well as host a regional workshop during the summer.

I was also a participant of the OKSci/OKMath Leadership Program. This program was developed in 2013 by the Math and Science Curriculum Directors at the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE). These directors wanted to empower teachers to become leaders and have a network of other teacher leaders throughout the state. Funding was secured through the OSDE and an eight-day training was developed. There were three total classes of the program; the first one was 2013-2014 and was called the Beta Class where approximately 25 teachers participated. Class 1 (20 teachers) occurred in 2014-2015, and Class 2 (30 teachers) occurred in 2015-2016. The program was suspended after Class 2 because of funding shortages experienced in the State of Oklahoma. For each class, applications were open to Math and Science teachers in the State of Oklahoma.

The training was facilitated by the Math and Science Curriculum Directors from the OSDE. The teachers would meet two days at a time, and they would experience different leadership-building exercises where they would identify targeted-leadership skills and problem-solving skills. The teachers were asked to pick a keystone project to work on throughout the program. For this keystone project, the teacher was asked to identify a problem and develop a solution to that problem and pitch their solution at the end of the program. Stakeholders from across the state were brought in on the last day of the program to listen to the keystone “pitch” from each participant. Stakeholders included: State Superintendent, administrators, legislators, business and industry, and other educators.

I plan to invite OKMath/OKSci participants as participants in my study as well. Because I was a mentor for several years, I personally know each participant that has traveled through the program and would consider myself a colleague in the Math and Science teaching profession. I am aware of the potential bias due to the personal relationships I have developed with the participants, and I plan to employ methods learned in qualitative research methods to increase trustworthiness and credibility.

My participation in these different programs could potentially shape my interpretations in a favorable way toward empowering teachers as leaders because of the positive impact the program has had on my life. Creswell (2014) stated the researcher will “recognize that their own backgrounds shape their interpretation, and they position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their personal, cultural, and historical experiences” (p. 8). In order to protect the integrity of the study I did as Creswell (2014) suggested and provided “multiple strategies for validation....to demonstrate the accuracy of the information” (p. 188). These strategies are discussed in the “Data Analysis” section.

Research Design

Epistemological Perspective

Constructivism is the epistemological perspective used to drive this study. Creswell (2014) described researchers with this perspective “often address the processes of interaction among individuals” (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). Creswell (2014) added that researchers “focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural setting of the participants” (p. 8). In this study,

teachers shared ideas, beliefs, perceptions, and experiences about the human practices within the educational world.

Because constructivism is the epistemological perspective for this study, qualitative research was used to drive the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed” (p. 14). Teachers have a variety of experiences and cultures in which they are immersed on a daily basis. Teacher leaders are emerging and attempting to enact change in the public school system. Guba and Lincoln (1994) described the role of the constructivist researcher as the “orchestrator and facilitator of the inquiry process” (p. 114). Through the inquiry process, the hope is an understanding of the perceptions of teacher leaders and how they develop capacity to become leaders within the educational system. The results of this study could assist in the future development of teacher leaders.

Methodology

The design used for this study is a qualitative comparative case study, which is a specialized type of case study. Creswell (2014) described case studies as “an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (p. 14). Patton (2002) described case study approaches are used when “individuals or groups are the primary unit of analysis (p. 439). For this study I drew from Merriam and Tisdell (2016) in order ensure my methodology is aligned with proper case study methodological procedures. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) defined a comparative case study as “collecting and analyzing data from several cases and can be distinguished from the single case study that may have subunits or subcases embedded within” (p. 39). The

focus of this study is the teacher leaders who have participated in teacher leadership development programs and teacher leaders who have not participated in teacher leadership development programs. This methodology supports the epistemological perspective of constructivism used to develop this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Methodological Procedures

The methodological procedures outlined in this section are driven mainly by Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) research design of qualitative case studies. Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) definition of a qualitative case study "is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 37). They also described case studies are used as, "the search for meaning and understanding, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategy, and the end product being richly descriptive" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 36). Because I compared two different groups of teacher leaders, I used a specific type of case study known as a comparative case study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described comparative case studies as those that "involve collecting and analyzing data from several cases and can be distinguished from the single case study that may have subunits or subcases embedded within" (p. 39). Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) portrayed comparative case study as "tracing the phenomenon of interest in a study across sites and scales" (p. 6). These scholars further explained "the term phenomenon directs us, first, toward something like a policy or a program and then, as it comes into focus, it leads us to ask what is unexpected about it, and why and to whom does it matter" (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 6). The phenomenon of focus for this study is teacher leadership training.

Research Population

This study was conducted in a large urban district in Northeast Oklahoma. The district serves a little over 19,000 students and has 1,044 teachers (OSPR Report Card, 2017). Approximately seven years ago, this district began using teacher leaders in their workforce. They started looking for classroom teachers that had the capacity to serve as instructional coaches and curriculum coordinators. These positions were created for each subject area at the secondary and elementary level.

Forty-seven percent of the students within the district qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch (OSPR Report Card, 2017). The ethnic makeup consists of 58.2% Caucasian, 6.1% African American, 3.4% Asian, 14.5% Hispanic, 8.4% Native American, and 9.4% with two or more races identified (OSPR Report Card, 2017). The district graduates 92% of their Seniors and has an average ACT score of 19.8 which is just above the state average of 19.4.

The structure of the central office provides insight on the nomothetic dimension of the district. The board of education is at the top of the organization flow chart, followed by the district leadership team. This team consists of the superintendent, followed by three associate superintendents. One of the associate superintendents oversees instructional services, which includes: assessments, curriculum and instruction, federal academic programs, principal administration, special education, safety, and health services. The teacher leaders selected for this study work in the curriculum and instruction department of the district.

Participant Selection

Purposive sampling was used in selecting the participants of this study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated “to begin purposive sampling, you must first determine what

selection criteria are essential in choosing the people or sites to be studied” (p. 95). In order to establish my selection criteria, I first defined the criteria I used to identify teacher leaders for this study. I used Katzenmeyer and Moller’s (2001) definition of teacher leadership: “teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; influence others toward improved educational practice; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership” (p. 6). For this study, the participants are teacher leaders that are serving in a formal leadership role. Participants included curriculum coordinators, instructional coaches, interventionist, and teachers with hybrid roles such as teaching part time and coordinating part time. I focused on one large urban district in Northeast Oklahoma. The importance of this step in the research process is outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), “the criteria you establish for purposeful sampling directly reflect the purpose of the study and guide in the identification of information-rich cases” (p. 95).

Participants for the study consisted of three teacher leaders who have participated in some sort of teacher leadership training or leadership development program. The participants will have needed to go through a training on leadership development, before taking on the role of teacher leaders, or during the role of teacher leader. The other three participants are serving currently as teacher leaders but were not a part of any training or leadership development program before they started serving in that capacity. An example includes a teacher who was hired for a position such as an instructional coach or curriculum coordinator that placed him/her in a teacher leadership role but had received no leadership training associated with the position before accepting the new role.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested selecting the number of participants needed to reach

the point of saturation or redundancy where I would begin to hear “the same responses to [my] interview questions or see the same behaviors in observations; no new insights are forthcoming (p. 100). With this sample of six, I was able to reach the point of saturation.

I reached out to the district where I conducted the study and continued through their approval process. Once I obtained district approval I obtained IRB approval (Appendix G). I already knew several curriculum coordinators within the district I selected and knew that had participated in teacher leadership training. I wanted to start with that specific group because I knew it would be the most difficult to find participants. Keeping IRB guidelines in mind, I was mindful of any ethical considerations regarding potential risks associated with my study. I reached out to the curriculum coordinators who had participated in leadership training and asked if they would be willing to participate in the study. I asked those individuals for recommendations of other teacher leaders currently serving in formal leadership positions, which might not have participated in teacher leadership training. I identified three other participants that would fit into that category and reached to ask them if they would participate. All participants were supplied with a consent form, which identified any potential risks and ensured confidentiality. The participants were asked to sign before they were allowed to participate.

Table 3.1*Research Participants*

Participants*	Role	Subcase	Years in Current Role	Total Years of Experience in Education
Sami	Secondary Instruction Team- Math	No training	6	18
Kelli	Secondary Instruction Team- Social Studies	No Training	6	22
Ashley	Elementary Instruction Team- Instructional Coach	No Training	2	15
Brooke	Secondary Instruction Team- Science	Leadership Training	6	19
Missy	Elementary Instruction Team- Instructional Coach	Leadership Training	6	23
Michelle	Title 1 Math	Leadership Training	9	18

*Pseudonyms have been used to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

Data Collection

“Data are nothing more than ordinary bits and pieces of information found in the environment” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 105). The way data is collected and analyzed is important to the qualitative research process. Creswell (2014) described several key

characteristics of qualitative data collection, such as it occurs in a “natural setting,” the “researcher is the instrument used to collect data,” and “multiple sources of data” are utilized (p. 185). The multiple forms of data are outlined below.

Interview

Interviews played a critical role in this research study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) specified “interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them” (p. 108). In order to learn about their feelings and perceptions surrounding teacher leaders, interviews were essential. All interviews were conducted within the “natural setting” as described by Creswell (2014). I interviewed every participant twice. The first interview revolved around the interview questions directly tied to my research questions guiding the study. The interview questions used in the first pre-planned interview can be found in Appendix A.

The second interview revolved around the photo-elicitation method discussed in a later section. The photo-elicitation prompts can be found in Appendix D. The interviews took place at a variety of locations. I worked with each participant to select a location that fit their schedule. Some of the interviews occurred at local coffee shops, some occurred at their offices, and others occurred at their schools.

This research study used what Erlandson et al., (1993) described as a “semi-structured interview” (p. 86) protocol. I used a developed set of interview questions (See Appendix A), but the interview included a variety of follow-up questions as well in order to meet the goal of what Erlandson et al., (1993) described as “a conversation with a purpose” (p. 85). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) further expounded on the semi-structured

interview process as allowing for flexibility in the order of questions asked and types of follow-up questions in order to gain the participant's full perspective.

Patton (2015) described interview questions as being "beginning points" that many times can lead to "new questions" (p. 254). I used what Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described as hypothetical interview questions, experience/behavior questions, and opinions/values questions. In order to get rich detail needed for qualitative research, I kept the following question stems listed by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) to guide follow-up questions during the semi-structured interview:

- Tell me about a time when...
- Give me an example of...
- Tell me more about that...
- What was it like for you when...(p. 119).

To increase credibility of the findings, I included field notes of each interview including a physical description of the setting, and a description of the body language and emotions of the participant being interviewed. Interviews were the first phase of the data collection process.

Observations. Observations were also used in this research study. Creswell (2014) describes several key characteristics of qualitative data collection, such as it occurs in a "natural setting", the "researcher is the instrument used to collect data", and "multiple sources of data" are utilized (p. 185). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) echoed the need for participants to be observed in their natural setting and went further to describe the need for researchers to have "a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account of the world obtained in an interview" (p. 137).

All observations were conducted within the participant's working environment. I observed the participants at times when they were serving as a teacher leader. Observations included professional development presentations, professional meetings within the district, teacher leaders working with other teachers in a grant program, and meetings within the leadership team. I conducted four observations: two from each group. My observations each lasted between 2-4 hours. I recorded my observations in field notes (see Appendix C). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state the field notes should be highly descriptive and should contain a reflective aspect that is accomplished directly after the observation is complete. In order to have structured field notes, I used a template (see Appendix C). This template was organized by the checklist provided by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) which outlined what good qualitative case study researchers have in their observations:

- The physical setting
- The participants
- Activities and interactions
- Conversations
- Subtle factors, and
- Your own behavior (pp. 140-141).

The research questions for this study were included on the template (Appendix C) in order to reference during each observation and ensure consistency during observations. Directly after each observation, I took time for reflect and analyze what had occurred (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Documents and artifacts. Participants were asked to provide any documents they feel represent their ability to be ‘teacher-leaders.’ These documents were collected during the interview or any time throughout the data collection phase of the study. These documents included: emails, certificates, and professional development presentations. I also asked participants to take a screen shot of any social media post which provides evidence of them in the teacher leader role. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated social media “can tell the researcher about the inner meaning of everyday events” (p. 165).

Photo-elicitation. The next phase of the data collection use photo-elicitation methods in order to gain further insight about the participant’s perceptions of being a ‘teacher-leader’. Rose (2016) outlined four strengths in using photo-elicitation as a data collection tool:

- Photographs can go beyond normal interview talk and cause a participant to discuss things researchers had not considered.
- This method is used to bring out a more personal and emotional response by participants, when discussing how their photos relate to the questions being asked.
- Photo-elicitation interviews are helpful in diving into things that participants might take for granted and consider normal.
- Participant-generated images can empower the participant to take an active role in the research process. (pp. 315-316)

Latz (2017) echoed the value of photo-elicitation has as allowing the participants to feel like they are taking more of an active role within the study and contributing at a higher level. Two weeks prior to the photo-elicitation interview, the participants were

asked to either take photos or bring images that relate to specific prompts surrounding teacher leadership. The three prompts can be seen below as well as in Appendix D.

1. Please bring one to two images, either ones you have found online or ones you have taken yourself, which expresses your perception of teacher leadership.
2. Please bring one to two images, either ones you have found online or ones you have taken yourself, which represents how prepared you felt to take on the role of a teacher leader.
3. Please bring one to two images, either ones you have found online or ones you have taken yourself, which represents any obstacles or barriers you encountered on your way to becoming a teacher leader.

I conducted a second interview in order to discuss the photos and how they relate to the participant's ability to identify as a 'teacher-leader.' Participants were asked to send me their images via email before our second interview. Some of the participants emailed the images, but others just brought the images to the interview. If they emailed me prior to the interview, I printed out each image separately and brought the images to the interview.

Hatten, Forin, and Adams (2013) suggested the interview should start with asking the participants where they located their photo and what types of searches were conducted in order to find the photo, because often these questions would lead to a response which provided insight to the personal connection to the photo and the subject being researched. Each interview began with this simple question, and the interview proceeded from there with more specific questions regarding each image and why they were important to the

participant. After all of the images were discussed individually, I presented all of the images and asked if the participants saw any connection between the images provided.

Data storage and security. All files and information collected are stored on Microsoft OneDrive, which is password protected and encrypted. This online file system will keep all information secure and confidential, and I was the only person with access. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained ethical issues can arise in online environments when it comes to confidentiality and security, so I obtained my consent in person. This consent, and any handwritten notes were kept in my locked office and all identifiable information was marked out of the handwritten notes. I coded the interviews, documents, photos, and any other info by using generic label such as Participant 1 (P1) in order to protect the confidentiality of my participants. Then used pseudonyms for the district and participants when discussing my findings.

Table 3.2*Data Storage and Security*

Data Type	Storage Location	Identifiable Information	Steps Taken to Ensure Security and Confidentiality
Consent forms from participants	Researcher's office, locked filing cabinet	Participants full name and signature.	Kept locked in filing cabinet to ensure security.
Consent form from district	Researcher's office, locked filing cabinet	District's full name and name of approving personnel.	Kept locked in filing cabinet to ensure security.
Audio recordings of interviews	Researcher's password protected cell phone.	Some participants used names that were later changed in transcriptions.	Audio files were deleted once transcribed.
Transcriptions of interview	Microsoft OneDrive	Used participant code provided after consent was signed. Ex. Participant 1 (P1) was used in transcription.	Kept on password protected and encrypted Microsoft OneDrive.
Field Notes	Microsoft OneDrive	Used participant code provided after consent was signed. Ex. Participant 1 (P1) was used in field notes.	Kept on password protected and encrypted Microsoft OneDrive.
Photos from photo-elicitation prompts	Microsoft OneDrive	Used participant code provided after consent was signed. Ex. Participant 1 (P1) was used to identify photos.	Kept on password protected and encrypted Microsoft OneDrive.
Documents	Microsoft OneDrive and researcher's office, locked filing cabinet.	Used participant code provided after consent was signed. Ex. Participant 1 (P1) was used label documents.	Kept on password protected and encrypted Microsoft OneDrive. Kept locked in filing cabinet to ensure security.
Index cards used to code and analyze data	Microsoft OneDrive and researcher's office, locked filing cabinet.	Used participant code provided after consent was signed. Ex. Participant 1	Kept on password protected and encrypted Microsoft OneDrive.

Data Analysis

Patton (2015) describes qualitative analysis as a matter of judgement, which “can vary depending on who is doing the judging, with what criteria, and for what purpose” (p. 520). In order to address what Patton (2015) describes as “the challenge of qualitative analysis” that “lies in making sense of massive amounts of data” (p. 520), I used the following strategies listed below to guide my data analysis. Realizing data analysis is a fluid process, I kept an open mind throughout the analysis and went where the inquiry process took me. I used Merriam and Tisdell’s (2016) reminder that “the practical goal of data analysis is to find answers to your research questions” (p. 201). In order to help remind me of this goal, I had a copy of my research questions up on the wall any time I was conducting data analysis. Data analysis began after the first interview and happened throughout the gathering of data. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described qualitative data analysis as a “simultaneous process” that occurs while the data is being collected. Therefore, I followed the constant comparative method throughout data analysis.

Organize Data

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) encouraged qualitative researchers to have data sets that are “organized and labeled according to some organizing scheme” (p. 200). As I collected my data, I began to organize it in a way that allowed me to keep the two groups separated, but still organized in association to each of the interview questions. Because each interview question is directly connected to my research questions, I knew it would

be important to organize my data to show that connection as I continued to analyze the data. Interviews were transcribed shortly after each one was conducted. Field notes and transcribed interviews were analyzed to identify any connections that should be noted within the transcription. After reading the transcriptions and field notes over several times, I began to pull out important pieces of data and I assigned them to an index card, labeled it with what interview question it was associated with, and which participant provided the statement or artifact. For example, when I identified an important piece of evidence from an interview with Kelli, I would put the evidence on a green index card with her name and the interview question associated with her response. Green index cards were utilized for teacher leaders that have not participated in training, and orange index cards were utilized to identify teacher leaders that have undergone training. I separated each set of index cards into each research question in order to ensure I was aligning with the focus of my study.

Code Data

Once all interviews, field notes, photo-elicitation interviews, and documents are collected and transcribed, they were analyzed and coded. A code is “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/ or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 3). I started with the initial interview, and I used colored index cards to place the evidence I thought was important and then added the codes found within the collected data. Initially, I used what Merriam and Tisdell (2016) called open codes on each index card. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe this process of open coding as “being open to anything possible” (p. 204). Once the evidence on the index cards was coded, I moved to

what Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe as analytical coding which “goes beyond descriptive coding” (p. 206). I analyzed the codes that were discovered and moved the index cards around to group ones with similar codes. I then identified different categories that emerged. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) define categories as “conceptual elements that cover or span many individual examples” (p. 206). I then did the same process with the other data listed above to see if they fit into the initial categories discovered or if new categories emerged.

Identify Themes and Apply Theory

Once categories were assigned, I thought about these categories through the lens of my epistemological framework of constructivism (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I discovered the categories that emerged within each group were directly tied to how the participants were making sense of the environment they were working within. Although each participant had a different story, the categories they constructed were similar. I then looked at the categories I identified through the theoretical lens of the Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model. When I applied the theory to my categories, I realized each category fell into one of two parts of the Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model. I utilized the Social Systems Model to discuss the themes which emerged during the analysis, to identify how the interrelationship of the *nomothetic and ideographic* aspects of the social system of the school and teacher leader emerge in the data.

Data Verification Strategies

To ensure qualitative validity, which Creswell (2014) described as “the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures” (p. 201), I used the triangulation of data and created a trustworthiness table. The trustworthiness table

includes many of the suggestions Creswell (2014) labeled as “validity strategies” (p. 201), such as member checking, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, thick description, and purposive sampling. This table identifies the different activities within the study that occurred to ensure my work was extensive and thorough.

Table 3.3

Trustworthiness Table

Criteria	Term	Activity
Credibility	Prolonged Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactions occurred over a year. These included multiple interviews and observations. • Communication via text and face to face was consistent and not rushed.
	Persistent Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations occurred with every interview. • Observations were prolonged and occurred over multiple hours and settings when applicable.
	Triangulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various forms of data were collected that included: multiple interviews, artifacts, observations, and photos.
	Peer Debriefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed themes that had emerged with a fellow peer. • Sought feedback from advisor over themes.
	Member Checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asked participants to clarify various aspects of the interviews. • Reached out to a few participants to see if they could relate to themes I identified.
Transferability	Thick Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I provided a thick description, using all the senses as described in Erlandson et al. (1993), of the setting and the participants body language and behavior after each interview and observation.
	Purposive Sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I divided the comparative case study into two groups. • Both groups were made up of teacher leaders serving in a formal role. • One group had teacher leaders that had experienced teacher leadership training. • The other group consisted of teacher leaders that had not experienced teacher leadership training.

Limitation of the Study

This study involves the perceptions and perspectives of six Northeast Oklahoma teacher leaders. The teacher leaders represented in this study have various roles (different content areas and/or serving different age groups of students) within the selected district which is one limitation of the study and the findings. The group of teachers that have been a part of teacher leadership training have been through different programs which could also serve as a limitation of this study. A true “understanding of their experiences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 4) is difficult to achieve because of the fact the environments are so different. And finally, not every school district has teacher leaders, so the findings of this might reach a limited audience.

Summary

Chapter III is a summary of the methodology and methodological procedures outlined for this qualitative case study. The population used for the focus of this study is Oklahoma teacher leaders that have participated in teacher leadership development programs and Oklahoma teacher leaders who have not participated in a leadership development program. Data collected and analyzed includes: observations, interviews, and the collection of documents and artifacts using photo-elicitation methods. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) outlined strategies to “ensure internal validity, reliability, and generalizability in interpretive qualitative research” (pp. 256-257). These strategies include: triangulation, member checks/respondent validation, adequate engagement in data collection, researcher’s position or reflexivity, peer review, audit trail, rich/thick descriptions, and maximum variation in sample selection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 257).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Chapter IV presents findings from this qualitative comparative case study. The purpose of the research was to gain a better understanding of teacher leader perceptions about the influence of leadership training on their success as a teacher leader within their system. Additionally, this study sought to understand differences in perceptions of leadership roles between teachers who had training and those who did not. This study was guided by an overarching question, and further informed by several research sub-questions.

Overarching Question

Are there differences in the manifestation of teacher leadership between those who have experienced leadership training and those who have not?

Research Questions

1. In each group, how is teacher-leadership manifested?
2. In each group, how do teachers perceive their roles and expectations as teacher leaders?
3. In each group, what obstacles have teacher leaders experienced and how have they addressed those challenges?

4. In each group, how has training or lack of training influenced teacher leader perceptions of their role?
5. How does the Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model explain the overarching research question and its sub-questions?

This chapter discusses the themes discovered during data analysis and provides answers to the stated research questions that framed this comparative case study. To give context to the reader, this chapter begins with a description of the district context to provide a better understanding of the participants' working system and climate. A detailed description of each participant offers an understanding of where each participant started in his/her educational career and how he/she advanced to a teacher leadership position. Pseudonyms for the district and participants were used to protect the identity and confidentiality. Themes that were discovered are discussed in detail. This chapter concludes with an answer to each research question.

Presentation of Data

District Context: Cedarville Public Schools

History and Demographics

Cedarville Public Schools (CPS) is a 6A district located in the Midwest. It was established in 1904 and has grown to be one of the largest districts in Oklahoma. According to the CPS website, its mission "is to educate, equip and empower a community of learners by providing dynamic learning opportunities which enable all students to be successful." The district mantra is "100 Percent Literacy, Engagement and Graduation-Every Student, Every Day." CPS lists core values, as well, and refers to these tenets as their "noble cause." The core values are listed below:

- We embrace the responsibility of our calling.
 - Each of us is accountable to serve our students, our district and our community. We do it with honesty, integrity and transparency.
- We are passionate about learning.
 - We consistently seek new ways to lead and follow our students into the future.
- We are a student-focused, relationship-driven school district.
 - We strive to engage our students and community through kindness, compassion and empathy.
- We celebrate and find strength in our diversity.
 - It takes people with different ideas, interests and backgrounds to drive our district forward.

The district provides a list of beliefs on the website, which is titled “Cedarville Public School Believes”:

- In utilizing 21st century technology in achieving academic success
- All students will be college or career ready
- Community beliefs and values are paramount to the development of our children
- In a culture of collaboration and respect for internal and external stakeholders
- In fostering an atmosphere of employee engagement and open communication
- In community partnerships
- In a culture of excellence that demonstrates trust, professionalism, integrity and character

- In providing quality student opportunities
- In promoting an environment that recognizes and celebrates successes
- Diversity enriches our learning environment
- We are responsible for building upon the rich history we have created

The CPS mascot is a bulldog. On the school's website, the beliefs are followed by the Bulldog Creed. "I am a Bulldog. I am TENACIOUS in pursuit of my goals. I act with INTEGRITY and show GRATITUDE in my daily life. I have high EXPECTATIONS for myself and others, and I show RESPECT through my actions and words. I am a Bulldog."

CPS is an urban-suburban district located approximately 15 miles west of one of the largest cities in Oklahoma. According to the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) website, enrollment is just over 23,000 students housed in 26 different school sites. This district is composed of 19 elementary schools, six middle schools, and one high school. The high school is divided into a Freshman Academy for 9th graders, the High School with 10th-12th graders, and an Options Academy offering alternative options for students struggling with traditional schooling. Table 4.1 provides a summary of CPS student demographics.

Table 4.1

Cedarville Public Schools Demographics

Description	Percentage of School Population
White	58.2%
Hispanic	14.5%
American Indian	8.4%
Black	6.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.4%
Two or More Races	9.4%
Male	50.8%
Female	49.2%
Students with Disabilities	12.3%
English Learner	7.1%
Economically Disadvantaged	43.6%

Oklahoma School Profile Report Card (2018)

The Oklahoma School Profile Report Card (2018) informed that 34% of students either met or exceeded grade-level standards by scoring at or above proficient on the state test given to 3rd through 10th grade students. The state average is 33%. CPS has a 92% graduation rate, with an average high school GPA of 3.2 (Oklahoma School Profile Report Card, 2018). Average ACT score for high school graduates is 19.8, which is slightly higher than the state average of 19.4 (Oklahoma School Profile Report Card, 2018).

Challenges

CPS has faced challenges stemming from increased growth in its student population. As previously mentioned, it is the largest high school in the state when looking at 9th through 12th grade enrollment. A Freshman Academy was opened in 2018 to mitigate the growing high school student population. Given the growing CPS student population, community members have voiced their concerns and have asked the district to consider splitting the high school into several campuses. In 2017, a High School Configuration Study Steering Committee was formed and tasked with providing possible

solutions for dispersing students, specifically at the high school level. The initial recommendation provided by the committee was to eventually divide the high school into three high schools by 2031. The committee provided the community the opportunity to provide feedback by posting an online survey about the preliminary recommendation. The High School Configuration Study Steering Committee analyzed survey results, and the majority of the community members were not supportive of separating the high school. The committee agreed to maintain the status quo.

Shortly after the High School Configuration Study Steering Committee provided their recommendation and solicited feedback from the community, there was a change in superintendent leadership at CPS. Outgoing Superintendent “Bob,” who had been with the district for six years, had made many improvements in facilities and navigated growth at the middle and elementary school levels. Several elementary school sites had been added to the district. During his time at CPS, Bob focused on community partnerships, such as programs for teen moms, meeting the needs of financially disadvantaged Cedarville citizens with the support from local nonprofit organizations, and community volunteer services from administrators and teachers. Bob was well-liked and respected in the community. The change in leadership caught many in the community by surprise, especially since Bob had several years left on his contract. The Board appointed “Suzie,” as interim superintendent. Suzie had previously served as an assistant superintendent for the district and had left to work at Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE).

Description of Participants

This section provides a detailed description of each participant interviewed for this qualitative comparative case study. Descriptions are organized by teachers who

participated in leadership training and teachers who did not participate in leadership training.

Participants Who Participated in Leadership Training

Teachers in this group participated in programs that emphasized teacher leadership skills. Two participants were a part of OKMath/OKSci Leadership. This OSDE program invited teachers throughout the state to participate. Throughout the year, several sessions were scheduled that focused on developing teacher leaders and preparing them to strategize solutions to problems they faced in their district or that education encountered statewide. One other participant in this group had attended a Master Teachers Program, also sponsored by the OSDE, although participation was 20-years earlier. The Master Teachers Program provided intense training for participants in how to analyze and interpret state education standards. Teachers were tasked with organizing and leading a regional professional development sessions in the summer, as well as book studies with teachers in their district throughout the school year.

Brooke. Brooke is on the Secondary Instruction Team and serves as the Science Specialist. Brooke began her education career at a tutoring center where she worked individually with students and taught both science and math. She shared that she embraced the opportunity and pointed out that the two subjects are closely connected. After tutoring, Brooke spent 13 years in the classroom, teaching a variety of high school science subjects. Her early career years were spent in a small district where she taught five subjects, including earth science, biology, general science, and advanced placement (AP) chemistry. Next, she moved to a larger district where she could teach fewer subjects and spend less preparation time each day. Brooke taught in the district for

eight years, teaching biology and chemistry, before moving to Cedarville High School. After teaching a year at CPS, she was approached by superintendent Bob to accept a position on the Secondary Instruction Team. Although positions were not posted, Bob envisioned a curriculum team composed of the district's best teachers. Brooke accepted his offer and has been working with secondary science teachers (6th through 12th grades) across the district in Cedarville for the past six years, coordinating and supporting CPS science teaching and curriculum. Brooke participated in OSDE's Master Teacher Program.

Melissa. Melissa began teaching in 1997 and taught for 17 years at two CPS elementary schools. Bob and the CPS assistant superintendent visited with Melissa in her classroom at the end of the school year and explained their vision to create new positions to build bridges between CPS's 14 elementary school buildings. The administrators admitted that they had yet to develop a job description, although the initial goal was to connect the elementary sites. They hoped Melissa would serve as one of two Elementary Instructional Specialists. They shared that several administrators had suggested Melissa as a worthy candidate and wondered if she would be willing to leave the classroom for the new role. She accepted, and for the past six years has been working as an Elementary Instructional Specialist. Melissa participated in the OSDE OKMath/OKSci Leadership Program.

Michelle. Michelle began her teaching career with CPS. Her first teaching assignment was as a 5th grade teacher at a Cedarville elementary school. After two years, she had the opportunity to transition into a hybrid role as part-time gifted teacher and part-time learning coach, where she bolstered students' life skills (e.g., note-taking,

listening skills, and techniques for implementing daily strategies for learning. Michelle remained in the position for two years. Political influences within CPS influenced her to transition back to a 5th grade classroom teaching position. By this time, Michelle had started her own family and was anxious to balance her personal and professional life. When the Title 1 Math Interventionist position became available, Michelle applied, was hired for the position, and has been working in that role for the past nine years. She likes that the position affords her an opportunity to work with struggling students implementing math interventions, while also allowing her to assist and lead teachers in her building. She also has opportunities to collaborate with her principal, the Elementary Instructional Specialist, and other Title 1 Interventionists throughout CPS. Michelle participated in the OSDE OKMath/OKSci Leadership Program.

Participants Who Did Not Participate in Leadership Training

Teachers in this group did not receive leadership or teacher leadership training before stepping into the role of the teacher leader.

Sami. Sami began her teaching career in a small, suburban high school teaching algebra. When she became engaged, she moved to a small rural town in Oklahoma's panhandle to live closer to her fiancé. She remained there for two years, teaching algebra 1, algebra 2, and geometry. She taught both advanced and remedial students in her classroom. After her family moved to Cedarville, she applied for a teaching position and was hired to teach algebra 2. During her nine-year tenure at Cedarville High School, she taught algebra 2 for a few years, and then taught a variety of math subjects. After a staff meeting, Bob met with her and shared the district was creating a position for instructional specialists. He wanted her to be the secondary Math Instructional Specialist. She

expressed her hesitancy, telling him it would be challenging to step out of the classroom and not directly connect with students. Bob told her that he understood the transition would be difficult, yet he was thrilled knowing she would accept the position. Sami has been serving as the Secondary Math Instructional Specialists for six years.

Kelli. Kelli did not attend college for teaching certification. Initially, she majored in sports psychology before earning her degree in psychology. When she started her clinical internship, she discovered how much she enjoyed working with children. Her first job was at a psychiatric clinic specializing in childhood psychiatric care. Part of her duties included providing a school learning environment for children who were receiving treatment. Kelli developed classroom lessons and discovered her passion for curriculum and student learning. She believed her calling was to assist children before they needed in-patient care and made the transition to work in the CPS middle school alternative center, which later became the Cedarville alternative high school. Kelli developed a curriculum to address motional behavior awareness therapy in the classroom. She got married and unfortunately had to leave her position to comply with a CPS policy that married couples could not be employed at the same school site. Kelli accepted a job in a neighboring community and began writing curriculum for various social-emotional programs implemented in public schools. After obtaining her alternative certification, she taught social studies in a large urban district. Following her husband's move to a different school district, Kelli returned to CPS. She first taught social studies at one of the middle schools, and then transitioned to the high school the following year. Kelli had eight years of experience working with students in various educational programs and eight years of classroom experience teaching social studies at

the secondary level. Bob asked her to serve as the Secondary Social Studies Instructional Specialist, and she has remained in the position for six years.

Ashley. Ashley began her college years as a marketing major and changed her focus to elementary education during her junior year. Her first job was teaching 5th grade at a CPS elementary school. She remained in that position for six years before transitioning to 3rd grade for an additional seven years. When the Elementary Instructional Specialist position became available, the assistant superintendent called her, encouraging her to apply. Ashley thought the position could be a new challenge for her. She applied and was selected for the position. She recently completed her second year as one of two CPS Elementary Instructional Specialists.

Thematic Findings

During data analysis for this study, two themes about participant perceptions emerged: individual character traits and teaching practice within an institution. Individual character traits included low self-efficacy, relationships, drive to learn, looking for solutions, and influence of training. Teaching practice experience included administrator influence, trust among teachers, providing support for teachers, and lack of training.

The following sections describe the findings of this qualitative comparative case study. I will discuss the thematic findings and include evidence that supports my findings from participant quotes, observations, and artifacts.

Individual Character Traits

Recurrent individual character traits embedded within the data included low self-efficacy, relationships within the district, drive to learn new things, strategizing solutions,

and influence of training. It is important to note that influence of training is categorized within individual character traits because, for this group of teacher leaders, leadership training was self-initiated and not a district requirement for a teacher leader position. Each of these traits is discussed in more detail below.

Low Self-Efficacy

Versland (2016) defines self-efficacy as “the belief in one’s ability to accomplish specific tasks and produce desired results” (p. 299). Teacher leaders in both groups showed evidence of low self-efficacy relative to their teacher leadership. Kelli, a teacher leader, had been a part of the CPS instructional specialists team from the beginning. During the interview, her body language changed when she shared, “I am just a plain old teacher leader.” She looked down and lost eye contact. These changes suggest the statement was meaningful to her. I asked her to tell me more about what she meant, and she said, “We’re always self-criticizing that, well, they’re not going to listen to me because who am I? And so I think it’s just, we’re so good at putting ourselves down. We’re not really good at building ourselves up.” This quote is important because the content shows evidence of low self-efficacy and a perception that teachers whom the specialists serve will not be open to collaboration. Another participant voiced similar apprehension. Ashley, the newest member of the curriculum team, said, “I was underqualified. I didn’t know what I was doing, I was being pushed into this role.” Although Ashley had 13 years of classroom experience, she felt underqualified for the job of being a teacher leader. These sentiments were echoed throughout the interview process and were apparent in my observations. While Sami was making a presentation at a local university to a room full of teachers from multiple districts, she described her job

as, “Having a ‘big title,’ but in essence it is just having the opportunity to work with amazing teachers and helping them in their work.” This statement suggests she was trying to minimize her position to make the teachers attending the session feel more comfortable with her as the leader for the presentation. These statements also imply that even though teacher leaders have classroom experience, they struggle to see themselves as a teacher leader.

Some participants had never envisioned themselves as a teacher leader or desired to take on the role of teacher leader. Brooke shared her thoughts as she reflected on becoming a teacher leader.

Honestly, I had no idea I was one. That’s a tough question because it was never a vision of mine. I’ve been asked a couple of times about doing administration and that’s still not something I want to do. It is not appealing to me, even though I know I would be working with teachers and kids and it would be great. That’s not the capacity I see myself in. I don’t think I was ever driven to be a leader.

The quote is important because it shows she never envisioned herself as a leader or saw the potential in her leadership ability. Later in the photo-elicitation interview, she shared the following image that described her initial feelings of being asked to be a teacher leader.

Figure 4.1

Brooke’s Image She Shared During Her Photo-Elicitation Interview.

YOUR THOUGHTS WHEN SOMEONE SAYS THAT
YOU WOULD BE GOOD FOR A JOB/ROLE/TEAM:



While discussing this image and talking about her hesitations about becoming a teacher leader, Brooke ended by saying, “People for some reason want to listen to me, and a lot of times they do what I tell them to do. It’s really weird.” She admitted it was difficult for her to validate the thought that people find value in her ideas. These quotes are meaningful because other individuals saw potential in Brooke as a teacher leader, and she still struggled to see potential in herself. It is important to acknowledge that these feelings of low self-efficacy occurred before taking on her official role.

Michelle’s low self-efficacy was more subtle than Brooke’s. She described feelings of a natural progression of teacher leadership, but was still hesitant to take ownership of the title of teacher leader:

Initially I wouldn’t describe myself as that [teacher leader], because it’s not a role that was prescribed to me. I mean it just kind of happened naturally over time in the roles that I have had. And I think it started probably young in my career and just what people saw in my classroom that I wasn’t even aware of. And I think that’s why sometimes I don’t put myself in that role is because it’s just what I do, right?

Michelle's and Brooke's perceptions evidence unrecognized potential and the belief that they did not initially consider themselves true teacher leaders.

Statements of humility appeared in concert with statements of low self-efficacy. As participants began to acknowledge their abilities, they also expressed statements of humility along with a desire to continuously better themselves. Kelli shared,

I think a good leader doesn't necessarily see themselves as a leader all the time. And I think that being able to be humble enough to continue learning and being a lifelong learner is huge, and learning right along with your students, whether they're adults or kids.

Kelli's perception of self-efficacy is that it is important to be reflective and always strive to be a good leader. In her experience, she sees leadership through a lens of growth. These findings show that although the teacher leaders in this group struggle to see themselves in their leadership role, they are dedicated to continuous learning and growing.

Relationships

Participants demonstrated that relationships are an essential element in their teacher leader role. Two types of relationships emerged from the data: 1) teacher-to-teacher and 2) teacher leader community. Foremost to teacher leaders are their relationships with the teachers they were leading. Ashley articulated the importance of building relationships with teachers as a need for them, "to know that they are valued and that the work they do matters. And the way to do that from our side is they have to know that we believe in them."

She continued,

I think it's anticipating and knowing and really understanding what daily life is like in a classroom. And knowing how hard teachers work, and all of the obstacles and challenges and also joys and celebrations that teachers face on a daily basis. And anticipating what they need to help make them successful.

The importance of ensuring the teachers they served felt valued and appreciated appeared several times throughout the interviews. The ability for the teacher leaders to acknowledge and understand what teachers endure daily seemed to be foundational for building relationships with teachers in the CPS district. Missy emphasized this connection was directly tied to having classroom experience before transitioning into the role of teacher leader, "I think having experience, we were able to put ourselves in their shoes, and make decisions, and having the knowledge and what is it really like day-to-day in an elementary classroom." Missy discussed the importance of teacher leaders having classroom experience and how the first-hand experience can help them relate to teachers.

Participants mentioned that until this common bond is established, the ability to move forward would be difficult. Sami echoed Ashley's thoughts, saying, "If you are actually going to do the position with fidelity, you are going to be a person that is able to build relationships with colleagues and is able to provide resources to help focus on student learning." She added that relationship development involves a sense of teamwork. Sami described this process.

You have to be willing to step outside of your comfort zone. You have to be willing to let other people know that you don't know all the answers, but you

know what? You're going to work hard to figure it out and you're going to work with them through this process. You're approaching any situation as in you are working with them and for them, not above them.

Evidence of Sami's commitment to develop a relationship with teachers was demonstrated when she conducted a professional development presentation for teachers at a conference. Even though she had not previously known any teachers attending her session, she purposefully made a concerted effort to connect and work with them as they progressed through her instruction. She moved from group to group, working beside them and collaborating with them while they practiced various mathematical modeling activities. She listened and made them feel valued. The teachers responded positively to her efforts by smiling and actively participating with Sami throughout her session.

Being empathetic was another important aspect of forming relationships with teachers. Michelle recalled how this was modeled by one of the administrators when she worked as a teacher.

So I think really great teacher leaders make me think of really great leaders in general. And so I have worked for three principals—all vastly different. And I would tell you the thing about the one I revered the highest is that she is all about people, people first. So what that looks like is they're empathetic but also willing to make tough decisions. I think that's the same for a teacher leader, you have to see people for who they truly are. And you have to be empathetic and you have to be able to put yourself in their place where they are.

Empathy for teachers and what they might be dealing with outside the classroom was also evident in the findings.

Teachers have real life going on, too. They have, you know, all of the issues that kids face, some of our teachers face the same issues. You know, we talk about kids being in chaotic homes, sometimes our teachers are in chaotic homes. (Brooke)

The second important type of relationship that emerged from the data was one that formed within the teacher leader community. The teacher leader community is composed of all teacher leaders who serve in different capacities throughout the CPS district. While there was a centralized office in the same building, the group worked in different content areas and grade levels. Nonetheless, they collaborated daily about their role as a teacher leader. The participants voiced how crucial these relationships were to their ability to accomplish their tasks. Kelli said, "I think for teacher leaders, you have to have a group. You have to have, not necessarily a clique, but a group that builds each other up." Other participants described the importance of these relationships in a more impactful and passionate way. Ashley described her feelings about the importance of this bond after initially taking on the role as a teacher leader,

It was, it was difficult, and we [teacher leader community] had a lot of crying sessions in our office together. We had a lot of scenario playing. We had a lot of discussions together about how to do our jobs. I would not be here without my team. There is absolutely no way. If we had to work in isolation, I would not be in this position.

Sami echoed the importance of relationships within the teacher leader community, "So it was great to have them as, as a support on the side as well, to not only empathize but to

problem solve. If I had to do this by myself, I don't know what would have happened, honestly.”

These statements point to the importance of having relationships within the teacher leader community to provide a support system for teacher leaders themselves. The relationships described above help teacher leaders feel more confident as they interact with teachers in the CPS district, and then build those relationships to make an impact on classroom instruction. Notably, the teacher leader community aspect of relationships was discussed only by participants who hadn't participated in leadership training.

Driven to Learn

Participants shared evidence of a vital need to push themselves to learn new things. Even though each teacher leader had years of classroom experience, they admitted a need to seek learning opportunities for themselves to affect teachers they served. Examples of learning included researching new ideas and growing in content knowledge, as well as learning about themselves and open to feedback. Sami explained this feeling as, “Be willing to grow yourself. You have to be humble. You have to be willing to accept criticism and feedback. You always have to be researching and developing yourself as well, so you can be prepared and knowledgeable.” Sami described various types of learning in her statement. A theme of active learning, both professionally and personally, was one shared by all participants. Kelli described her need to learn in a hierarchical way.

I think that sometimes we, because we're continuing to learn, and we sometimes don't think that we are [the expert], because we're still learning. We don't think that we are there yet. I think of the hierarchy that, the triangle, and we've not

reached the top, which truthfully, if you think you've reached the top, you're really at the very bottom.

Sami and Kelli both highlighted the need for continuous learning and paired that notion with a realization that knowledge does not make a person better than those around them. Knowledge cannot be used to make others feel inferior. It should be used to build others up.

Evidence of the drive to continue to learn was apparent in observations, as well. I observed Ashley as she made a professional development presentation to new elementary teachers. Her focus was helping teachers prepare for the upcoming school year. She discussed classroom management, classroom procedures, and appropriate interactions with colleagues. Ashley shared an article she found while doing research for the presentation, which described the need for new teachers to seek positive teachers in their buildings as healthy role models. The article served as another piece of evidence demonstrating a necessary drive to continually learn new things and share those newly acquired skills with teachers they serve.

The drive to learn for teacher leaders who participated in leadership training was evident in mounting intensity. Brooke succinctly shared her idea of learning. "I am a teacher leader because I love to learn. I live and breathe this. It's a passion that won't die. And so I think I infect other people." She used the word "passion" to describe her desire to learn and how this emotion impacts others around her. Missy also used the word "passion" to describe her drive to learn and how this excitement has played a role in becoming a teacher leader.

I just have a drive to be helpful and also a passion for learning. And so I was always the one to say, ‘I want to learn how to do that and I’m going to step out and I’m going to go figure out how to do that.’ And then the principals I had would then say, ‘well, would you then teach this or help with this or...?’ so I think it just naturally, I always had a drive to just want to learn.

Missy reiterated this idea during her photo-elicitation interview. She shared the following image and description.

Figure 4.2

Image Missy Shared During Her Photo-Elicitation Interview.



When asked to share why this photo was significant to her, Missy explained:

I think a teacher leader is someone who is willing to go above and beyond. Willing to stretch themselves. Whether that is, I’ll try the new curriculum or I will pilot this or I will do this. I’m going to get up the mountain, I’m going to learn all about it, and then I’m going to help you get up the mountain.

The emphasis of teacher leaders in this study goes beyond being driven to learn. It extends to helping others around them learn and grow, as well. This focus extends beyond merely sharing information. It includes partnering with teachers and working

together to accomplish a goal. It is important to note that articulating a partnership in this effort was unique for teacher leaders who had experienced leadership training.

Influence of Leadership Training

The impact of leadership training was another theme that emerged with the three participants who had participated in such instruction. To reiterate the point made at the beginning of this chapter, I included this theme as an individual character trait because each participant independently pursued their leadership training; it was not required for their role as a CPS teacher leader. Missy described the impact of participating in OSDE OKMath/OKSci Leadership.

The passion to learn and grow pushed me to join OKMath/OKSci Leadership. The program was phenomenal and really helped me to think big and then think about what is attainable. I want to be very impactful, and it helped me find ways to do that. (Missy)

While describing her experience, Missy's body language changed, and she spoke with a smile and a sense of excitement. Michelle, who also participated in OSDE OKMath/OKSci Leadership, described the program's influence on her as a teacher leader. She said, "So that obviously stands out in my mind as a huge opportunity and huge influence on me as a leader." Brooke, who participated in the OSDE Master Teacher Program, described her experience in the following way.

The Master Teacher Program helped prepare me to be a teacher leader. Being a principal investigator of a large scale professional development initiative.....was humungo. I feel like that, the two things I learned from that [Master Teacher Program] have been reflection on self, but also expanding my viewpoint and

perspective and continuing to be able to see things from other people's points of view. That has just been, from the teaching to the professional development to leading professional development.

The personal testimony from these participants provide evidence of the influence teacher leadership training has had on their role as a teacher leader. They agree that the experiences provided them opportunities to learn about themselves and grow in the process. The leadership training provided them opportunities to think about educational topics in creative ways and broaden their viewpoints about teaching and leading.

Looking for Solutions

Looking for solutions to problems emerged as a theme for the teacher leaders who participated in leadership training, which did not appear as a finding for those who did not experience training. This solution-focused mindset provided a framework for these teacher leaders to solve problems in unique ways. When problems or issues arose for these three teacher leaders they seemed to look past the problems/barriers and began looking for solutions. Michelle, who participated in leadership training, explained,

The thing that still stands out to me to this day is the idea of being a 'solutioneer.' Because I think prior to that it's so easy for teachers to kind of get into the mindset of looking at the barriers and feel limited by those barriers. Instead of looking for solutions.

The term "solutioneer" was a foundational concept discussed in detail throughout the OSDE OKMath/OKSci Leadership program, which emphasized the importance of teacher leaders striving to find creative ways to solve problems educators face. In the second interview, Michelle mentioned a similar idea, saying, "I think that has stuck with

me as a leader of offering solutions.” Brooke, who participated in the OSDE Master Teacher Program also felt being solution-centered was important. When discussing working with teachers in the CPS district, she described the way she collaborated with teachers to address problems. “Being solution-centered, always being solution-centered. And being ok with the fact that the solution may not come from me, but being able to go find it.” Missy also discussed thinking creatively about solutions, highlighting the need to look outside the district to find solutions.

I want to reach out and go, ‘how do other districts handle this?’ I want to learn how teacher leaders in other districts do things. I think sometimes you can get stuck in a rut in a district. You don’t know anything different. (Missy)

The sentiments shared above are evidence of the importance teacher leaders place on finding solutions to problems. There are times in education when problems arise, and teachers often complain about the problem with no drive to find solutions. These three teacher leaders see the importance of their role as an individual with a solution mindset. The collaborative nature of the participants’ comments is important. It is not just teacher leaders’ ability to find solutions. These three are distinctly convinced that working with other teachers is necessary for finding solutions. While this solution-centered mindset is very similar to problem solving, it provides an extra layer because the solutions given tend to have more thought and collaboration from others involved in the process.

Summary of Individual Traits

The individual traits that were similar among all participants included the low self-efficacy in regards to their ability to be teacher leaders. The importance relationships were also another finding that all of the participants had in common. There were two

types, 1) teacher to teacher relationships and 2) teacher leader community. The participants who did not have training tended to have an increased focus on the teacher to teacher relationships, where the participants who had leadership training placed a greater emphasis on the relationships of the teacher leader community. Another finding that was common among all of the participants was their drive to learn new things. There was a slight emphasis with the participants who experienced leadership training on partnering with other teachers to share learned information. There were two findings that emerged from the data that were unique to the three participants who had experience leadership training before taking on their role; those findings were looking for solutions and the influence of training.

Institutional Aspects of Teacher Leaders' Perceptions

The second common theme among participants was teaching practice within an institution, which includes administrator influence, trust among teachers, providing support for teachers, and lack of training. Each of these items will be discussed in the sub-sections below.

Administrator Influence

The impact administrators had on participants was evident throughout each interview. Each teacher leader was invited by either the superintendent or assistant superintendent to apply for or accept the position of teacher leader. When I asked Kelli about her journey in becoming a teacher leader, she responded, "I was approached. This is not something I picked for myself. Honestly, I didn't really feel like I could say no to Bob." Ashley described a similar situation. She said Bob, Superintendent at that time, and her principal visited with her one day after school and offered her the position.

The superintendent said that they were creating positions for instructional specialists, and he said, ‘We would like you to take that position, so you’re going to come on board right?’ (Ashley)

Brooke said, “I didn’t apply for the job. It was one of those that they came in and they said ‘We want you to do this.’ There wasn’t a position posted or anything.” Each participant articulated a hesitation to accept the role of teacher leader, and each described how honored they felt that a prominent school leader saw potential in them. Being invited to transition to the new role motivated them to accept the challenge. Missy said, “I think my first thought in this position when they came, I mean I was flabbergasted, to even be asked, but I felt like I was glad that they were looking at people who had experience.” The participants expressed a feeling of not wanting to disappoint their administrators. Kelli described her emotions after talking with Bob, “Somebody believes in me. I can do this. And they’re putting effort into me. They’re giving me this opportunity. I need to take advantage of this. I need to show them that I can do this.” Bob was intentional in selecting teacher leaders and purposeful in how he approached each one to offer them the position. He wanted them to feel they were the best teacher for the job and to make sure they felt they were a part of a unique, hand-picked team.

Participants offered other examples of the impact administrator influence had on them prior to being offered the opportunity to be a teacher leader. Teacher leaders recognized instances when their respective principals were preparing them to be a leader. Sami reflected on interactions with her principal while she was teaching:

But I will also say that my principal at the time....she had really been kind of giving me a lot of tasks and had been really developing me to be a leader without really telling me that's what she was doing. And realizing that she had been grooming me, maybe, a little bit all this time. (Sami)

Sami emphasized her principal's impact. The confidence was infectious. With it, she was able to picture herself in the role of the leader, and it helped her feel more confident as she moved into the new teacher leader position. Michelle confirmed similar feelings about the principal she worked with before transitioning into a teacher leader. She said her principal was always encouraging her to step outside her comfort zone.

She said, 'I think you'd be great at it. You're so good with kids.' And I mean, she may have even talked about leadership qualities, but I think her coming to me and not me pursuing that almost made me feel like, 'Oh, she sees something in me. She has confidence in me that she thinks I can do this.' And so I think that probably set me on a pathway of feeling like a leader. (Michelle)

To summarize, participants felt the influence of administrators in two ways: 1) being approached to transition into the new role and 2) developing as a leader by way of their building-level principal while teaching in a classroom. Both are directly related to the institutional aspects of CPS.

Trust Among Teachers

Participants agreed that they felt a lack of buy-in from CPS district teachers they served. They described situations where teachers expressed uncertainty about their intentions as leaders, and these teachers were reluctant to trust the teacher leader. Sami

believed trust issues stemmed from previous experiences with initiative aimed at using teachers as leaders.

I wouldn't be their first thought as a person to go to to help support them, just because of my experience teaching with them previously and being their department head and such. And I think before we transitioned to this role, previous positions were utilized differently. And so that left a bad taste in a lot of teachers' mouths. And so they didn't quite know how to accept what we were doing.

Sami found teachers in her building—where she had served as a department head—were reluctant to reach out for support because of her serving them differently before. Many times, department heads fulfill a more managerial role instead of a supportive one. Hence, when Sami's position transitioned to an instructional specialist, teachers in her building were hesitant to accept her help. She articulated the attitude of one teacher, "Oh, you're coming in and you're judging what I'm doing and you're going to tell me everything I'm doing wrong." This common misconception and feelings of mistrust were obstacles teacher leaders had to overcome.

Trust issues sometimes manifested as negative interactions in district-level meetings. In fact, some teachers were hostile toward teacher leaders. Study participants expressed uncertainty about how to handle such situations and how to overcome the aftermath of a negative interaction. Ashley described one teacher's reaction to her during a meeting after school.

So I actually had a lady throw her arm back over her chair and say, ‘So you’re telling me,’ like starts to yell, and I hate confrontation. But basically she was just very combative and yelling at me, which I had never, I’ve never experienced.

Ashley’s description emphasized how the negative interaction caught her off guard, and she continued to describe the teacher’s resistance to any support. Lack of trust among teachers in the district has caused barriers to progress that teacher leaders must overcome to reach challenging teachers. Notably, trust among teachers and teacher leaders was a theme unique to the three case study participants who did not participate in teacher leadership training.

Providing Support for Teachers

The importance of providing support for teachers was emphasized many times by study participants. Ashley talked about the significance of teacher resources. “We do a lot of product creation to help make things gel together and fit.” Documents she shared with new teachers at a professional development session were explicit examples. Her handouts were organized, clear, aesthetically pleasing, and similar in design. It was obvious that significant time and effort were invested in creating these documents. The CPS logo was prominently placed at the top of each one. Ashley spoke about the importance of ensuring teacher resources looked professional.

Providing support for teachers was also articulated as collaborating with teachers to improve classroom instruction. Ashley, the newest member of the instructional specialist team, discussed how she believed her role had progressed since she first transitioned into her teacher leader position two years prior to our discussion. “We are stepping into the role of coaching teachers. We work on best practices in the classroom;

classroom management with teachers in terms of like the coaching scenarios; how to work with gifted students, etc.”

Sami also expressed the role changes.

In the beginning, it was just helping support maybe some initiatives that were going on in the district, helping teachers be successful with what was happening there. But I think it’s starting to transition into a true coaching role, to where teachers are maybe more accepting with us coming in and observing and having conversations with them, team teaching with them, and modeling. (Sami)

The collaborative nature of the teacher leader role was noticeable during one of my observations. In this instance, Brooke was working with a group of teachers on implementing a lab for a science classroom and described an interaction with a group of teachers who are adjusting a prescribed lab.

A common complaint that I had come up with teachers is that they say that the kids just feel like we circle around the topic too long, and they take the initiative to shorten it. Now my first inclination was “No, dammit, do what they want.” But then, honestly, I was like “I need to trust them. If they’re all saying this and it’s happening again and again, we need to listen to them and be willing to let go and let’s just see what happens.” That seems like a short solution, but for me it was saying, “Let them drive the bus.”

This story was important because it demonstrated true collaboration between teachers in the classroom (e.g., Brooke noticing an issue with the lab, trusting teachers’ professional judgment, and allowing teachers to make needed adjustments to achieve a better student

outcome). This example demonstrates a method for providing support to teachers: empowering them to take ownership of their classroom.

Kelli described support for teachers in similar ways but extended the teacher leaders' reach, saying, "different things that we can do to bridge the gap between districts, between state, and our district." This distinction was unique and important, because teacher leaders often manage dynamics occurring within their institutions and at a statewide level.

Lack of Leadership Training

When asked to describe the type of leadership training they received either before transitioning into or after accepting the role of teacher leader, the three participants who had not received teacher leadership training had similar responses. Kelli explained, "It was a learning curve because we were all just plucked directly from the classroom. We had no leadership training. I had not had any experience outside of my own classroom and working with my colleagues in the building." She described different scenarios in which she felt unprepared to handle situations and navigate discussions. Sami shared similar feelings. "I did not feel like I was equipped in any way of having those conversations with teachers and building a foundation with those teachers to where we could work professionally together for growth." Both quotes demonstrate that the lack of training made the participants feel ill-equipped to handle different aspects of their teacher leader role. Even so, it is pertinent to note that although study participants did not have formal leadership training, they had support from other instructional specialists who learned together on their journey. The importance of this resource was emphasized earlier in this section among the narratives about relationships.

Summary of Institutional Aspects of Teacher Leaders Perceptions

The institutional aspects discussed in the above sections that were similar among both groups of teacher leaders included the influence of administrators and providing support for teachers. Both of these themes emerged with all of the participants in this study. The three teachers that did not experience leadership training produce a unique theme of having identifying the trust among teachers as being a barrier they experienced. They felt a general lack of buy-in from teachers and expressed resistance. This was not a theme that emerged with the three teachers who had experience leadership training. Finally, the lack of training was a theme among the three teachers who had not participated in leadership training. They felt that they were not prepared for some of the situations they were placed in for their new role as a teacher leader.

Research Questions Answered

This section answers the research questions associated with this comparative qualitative case study.

Research Question One

This section details findings related to the first research question, which asked: “In each group, how is teacher leadership manifested?”

There were strong similarities among each group of teacher leaders (i.e., those who had teacher leadership training and those who did not) when asked what drove them to become teacher leaders. Unanimously, participants in the study had not envisioned themselves as a teacher leader prior to their transition into the role. They agreed that the reason for transitioning into the new role was the superintendent or assistant

superintendent explicitly asking them to do so. Most teacher leaders reluctantly transitioned into the role because they did not want to disappoint their administrators. Each participant expressed a struggle with low self-efficacy and a belief they were not worthy of being a teacher leader. Although they had confidence in their teaching ability and an extensive understanding of effective classroom instruction, they doubted their ability to help other teachers learn and grow. Administrators' encouragement when first approached about the transition to teacher leader was crucial for perceiving themselves as a teacher leader.

Similarities among the two groups and their perspectives on the role of teacher leader was also obvious when the study participants discussed important and necessary character traits for a teacher leader (e.g., being humble, having different perspectives, and building relationships with other teachers were all highlighted in the data).

One theme unique to study participants with teacher leadership training was obvious when answering what being a "teacher leader" meant to them. Each discussed the importance of being solution-centered in their interactions with teachers and administrators. This concept was important because it established a clear connection between the influence of leadership training and its impact on a teacher leader's perception of his/her teacher leadership.

Research Question Two

This section details findings related to the second research question, which asked: "In each group, how do teachers perceive their roles and expectations as teacher leaders?"

Teachers who had leadership training and those who did not shared similar perceptions of their role as and expectations of being a teacher leader. Each study

participant described a need and desire to be an approachable leader who is willing to work with all types of individual personalities. Many of the teacher leaders described the need to be a servant leader willing to work alongside teachers in the “trenches.” They commonly believe their role does not include a supervisory component. Instead, they approach their job as collaborative, with an emphasis on building relationships.

Study participants emphasized an essential need for teacher leaders to continually grow and learn. While not a district requirement, this obligation was self-imposed for teacher leaders. This finding highlights an important aspect because it is linked with a universal sense of low self-efficacy and an undervalued perception of the ability to accomplish the task of being a teacher leader. Study participants agree they must prove they can do their job with fidelity, thus, the essential need for continuous growth and learning.

Research Question Three

This section details findings related to the third research question, which asked: “In each group, what obstacles have teacher leaders experienced and how have they addressed those challenges?”

There are important differences between the teachers who had experienced leadership training and those who had not with regard to the way in which they encountered obstacles. Yet, there are similarities in how they addressed such challenges. Teacher leaders with no leadership training articulated trust issues with teachers they served, saying these were among the primary obstacles they encountered in their role. This disconnect manifested as a lack of buy-in from teachers, overwhelmingly negative interactions, and resistance to change. These issues are directly connected to

CPS and teacher leader interactions with teachers throughout the district. Study participants addressed trust in two ways. First, they relied on the teacher leader community to support and encourage them when they struggled with resistant teachers. Colleague teacher leaders not only empathized with them, they also problem-solved unique situations. Second, they addressed challenges with trust by building this bond any way they could strategize a solution. Often this included ensuring basic needs were met, and then building a relationship with the teachers they served by working together toward common goals.

Obstacles for teacher leaders with leadership training were described as more general in nature. One participant mentioned a lack of adequate time spent with teachers. Another participant highlighted a lack of funding for teacher training. Being overly passionate was mentioned as an obstacle because one participant felt this emotion could overwhelm teachers on certain occasions. Likewise, becoming emotionally drained by the job was discussed as a personal barrier, as was the importance of balancing life and work. Regardless of the barrier, study participants overwhelmingly agreed that maintaining relationships with teachers was their priority. They expressed a desire to continue to understand and find a solution for their daily struggles. Study participants acknowledged that many of the obstacles they articulated were outside of their control (e.g., lack of time and funding). They found comfort believing that fostering solid relationships with the teachers they served was something they could control. This goal had become their focus and their solution for making the best of their role and the impact they could make on classroom instruction.

Research Question Four

This section details findings related to the third research question, which asked: “In each group, how has training or lack of training influenced teacher leader perceptions of their role?”

One notable difference was obvious in perceptions of teacher leaders and how training, or lack thereof, influenced their role. Those who did not have leadership training were quick to point out the absence of training throughout their interview. Study participants without leadership training discussed situations with teachers they serve in which they did not feel equipped to handle. One participant described a feeling of being “plucked” from the classroom and how intimidating it was to step into the role of teacher leader. Lack of leadership training caused heightened uncertainty when thinking about their role. The three participants without training relied more heavily on relationships within their teacher leader community, purposefully making connections a vital part of their job and a necessary component for their success. One participant admitted, “I couldn’t do this job in isolation.” (Ashley).

Study participants with teacher leadership training frequently referred to the programs they attended. When specifically asked about training associated with their teacher leader role, these three participants mentioned the impact of OSDE training opportunities. Each was quick to mention lack of CPS training, and praised leadership training they independently sought to improve their leadership skills. Two participants with training pointed out how the lessons they learned in training influenced their perspectives about the essence of being a teacher leader and how to approach job tasks. They shared that training prompted them to approach situations differently and

made them think more globally about a problem at hand. In other words, training prompted teacher leaders to consider different viewpoints and critically problem solve with out-of-the-box solutions. It was obvious that study participants with training analyzed problems differently than those without training. Training had taught teacher leaders to constantly look for solutions and not become stuck focusing on a problem.

Research Question Five

This section details findings related to the fifth research question, which asked: “How does the Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model explain the research questions for this study?”

The answer to this research question is addressed thoroughly in Chapter V under the section titled “Discussion Through the Lens of Getzels and Guba’s Social Systems Model.”

Overarching Research Question

This section describes findings related to the overarching research question which asked: “Are there differences in the manifestation of teacher leadership between those who have experienced leadership training and those who have not?”

The findings of this study provide insight into participants’ views about being teacher leaders. Many insights among all participants were similar. Study participants in both groups (i.e., those who had and those who had not received leadership training) described feelings of low self-efficacy in the way they viewed themselves as teacher leaders and their ability to successfully fulfill the role of teacher leader. All participants expressed feelings of doubt. Although they shared a confidence in their ability to be

effective teachers, they struggled to see the worthiness of sharing their expertise with other teachers as part of a teacher leader role. Likewise, all study participants revealed they became teacher leaders because they were approached by administrators to transition into the role. Administrator influence encouraged each participant and impacted their decision.

Participants unanimously agreed that relationships are a foundational part of their ability to be effective teacher leaders. The primary type of relationship described involved an interaction between a teacher leader and the teachers they served. Notably, teachers without training held support from the teacher-leader community in high esteem. These participants proactively discussed the importance of support from other teacher leaders. Teacher leaders with training did not express a similar reliance on the community.

Study participants in both groups articulated a drive to learn new subject knowledge about teacher leaders to feel equipped for their jobs and seen as content experts. Participants with leadership training exhibited an increased intensity in their drive to learn new ideas. The word “passion” was used to describe their need to learn and grow. This finding was particularly interesting. Providing support for teachers was a common goal for all study participants. Examples ranged from being a good listener and providing professional resources to giving content advice and collaborating to accomplish a goal. Study participants emphasized that providing support for teachers was a necessary character trait for an effective teacher leader.

While teacher leaders with and without leadership training shared similar beliefs about their role, some findings were unique to a specific group of participants. Those

who did not experience leadership training described trust issues with teachers they served, identifying teacher uncertainty as an obstacle they encountered as a teacher leader. Teacher leaders with leadership training also encountered negative and resistant teachers, although these participants attributed the challenging behaviors as a personality trait inherent to specific teachers. They did not perceive the obstacle as a personal deficiency in their abilities, as those without training might have. Again, teacher leaders who had experienced leadership training were noticeably more focused on finding solutions to obstacles they encountered instead of focusing on trust issues among teachers. This finding is important because it demonstrates that leadership training impacts how participants perceive their ability to manage obstacles and barriers to their job tasks.

Summary

Chapter IV reported findings and themes that emerged from interviews and observations, which highlighted similarities among and differences between two groups of teacher leaders—three participants with and three participants without leadership training. Distinctions were made about their thoughts and perceptions surrounding the role of a teacher leader. Similarities in perspectives included feelings of low self-efficacy as teacher leaders and an ability to effectively work as a teacher leader. Similarities were also found in the impact of administrators in encouraging teachers to transition into teacher leader positions, the emphasis on relationships being a foundational aspect of the teacher leader role, and the driving force behind participants' desire to learn and grow both professionally and personally. Differences included how teacher leaders perceive trust issues among teachers they served and how those with leadership training focus on

solutions to barriers and obstacles they encounter. In the next chapter, the Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model serves as a theoretical framework for further analyzing these findings and connecting them to related literature.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Chapter V uses the Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model and current literature to draw conclusions informed by this study. First, I separate my findings into nomothetic and idiographic dimensions of the model, and then I focus on the interrelationship between these two dimensions relative to my findings. I also introduce a revised Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model for better understanding of social systems.

Discussion Through the Lens of Getzels and Guba's Social Systems Model

The Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model defines a “social system” as a community and its working parts. For this study, the “community” of participants were working in the Cedarville Public School (CPS) system. Getzels and Guba (1957) identified two main dimensions that compose a social system. Institutions are the nomothetic dimension, and individuals the idiographic dimension. The following sections elaborate on my research questions and study findings through the lens of Getzels-Guba Social System Model. A discussion will include practical applications of the model and an updated perspective of how findings alter the way in which this model can be considered.

Nomothetic Dimension of the Study

The *nomothetic* (or normative) dimension comprises the institution, role, and role expectations (Getzels & Guba, 1957). For this study, the institution is Cedarville Public Schools whose administration made an intentional decision to insert formal teacher leadership positions in the institution. Although administrator influence was one theme that emerged from this study, it is important to recognize that administration's impact began long before specific teacher leaders were approached. The transition was first envisioned as using teacher leaders to enact change within the institution. The decision to change the structure of the CPS institution was pivotal for change, thus is critical when scrutinizing the findings of this study.

Another aspect of the nomothetic dimension is role. The specific role examined in this study was the instructional specialists' position, which was further classified into a) subject areas for the secondary level and b) a variety of elementary positions. These groupings were created to accommodate necessary support for CPS district size. Getzels and Guba (1957) discussed different aspects associated with “roles,” one of which is where roles are positioned within the institution. This aspect was important for participants of this study, many of whom discussed the importance of their instructional specialists' team and the need to collaborate with each in a variety of scenarios. Clearly, participants relied on the teacher-leader community for support and the importance of having the community located in a singular, central space. This finding stresses the need for CPS to be aware of the intricacies of this dimension and the influence it can have on the people filling the role. In the future, if the offices must be

relocated it would be beneficial for CPS to have them housed in the same location in order to keep the teacher-leader community environment.

Role expectations are the final aspect of the nomothetic dimension. In this study, role expectations are unique because they were not established prior to position implementation. Although administration had a broad vision for the role, a specific job description of how teacher leaders should serve teachers in the district and support their instructional needs was not developed. Accordingly, participants in each group felt uncertain when they started their role. The lack of clear role expectations also forced participants to individually address challenges and barriers caused by teacher-clients not understanding the role and purpose for teacher leaders. Findings from this study demonstrate a need for this institution to clearly establish role expectations prior to role implementation. Doing so would have helped to mitigate confusion for teacher leaders in this district and the teachers they serve.

Lack of leadership training associated with the teacher leader role was another key theme that emerged from this study. Evidence showed that participants who did not pursue their own leadership training felt ill-equipped to manage certain aspects of their role. Findings from this study suggest that these teacher leaders may have experienced enhanced success and efficacy if the district had provided additional leadership training. Additionally, given the importance of relationships to fulfill their roles, these teacher leaders may have benefited from collaborative training to support the development of a leadership team prior to taking the responsibilities of their new positions.

Idiographic Dimension of the Study

The *idiographic* (or personal) dimension comprises the individual, his/her personality, and need-disposition. Personality and need-disposition are unique for each individual. Hence, these two elements of this dimension are key to understanding that no two people act precisely the same. Getzels and Guba (1957) describe personality as the organization within someone that governs their reaction to what is happening around them. Although participants' personalities varied in many ways, study results indicated that each individual demonstrated a drive to learn new things. This personality trait was inherent prior to an individual taking on the role of teacher leader. This finding was important because these teacher leaders were willing to continue to learn how to fulfill their new responsibilities effectively, and the role of “continual learner” may have helped support relationship building with the teachers they were supervising. This drive for continual learning may have been the indicator that caused administrators to actively recruit these individuals for leadership roles. This aspect of the personalities of these teacher leaders seemed to be essential for successfully fulfilling the teacher leader role in this district.

Results from this study suggested that participants' personalities also played a role in the ability to form relationships with teachers they served. CPS teachers described their interactions with teacher leaders as thoughtful, purposeful, and productive. This collaborative spirit helped them respond to some of the challenges they faced, such as lack of trust, to fill the role of teacher leader.

Getzels and Guba (1957) defined the need-dispositions of individuals as “individual tendencies to orient and act with respect to objects in certain manners to

expect certain consequences from these actions” (p. 428). In terms of need-dispositions for participants in this study, the influence of training provided the ability of the three participants that sought out the training to react differently in certain situations than the three participants that had not experienced training. Those with training oriented their mindset to be more solution-focused, which made their need-disposition different from the other participants. This finding is important because the teacher leaders who had completed training were able to “remove themselves” from challenging situations to more effectively engage in collaborative problem solving with these teachers. An example of this is was described in the previous chapter when Brooke was working with a group of teachers on implementing a lab for a science classroom and described an interaction with a group of teachers who are adjusting a prescribed lab.

A common complaint that I had come up with teachers is that they say that the kids just feel like we circle around the topic too long, and they take the initiative to shorten it. Now my first inclination was “No, dammit, do what they want.” But then, honestly, I was like “I need to trust them. If they’re all saying this and it’s happening again and again, we need to listen to them and be willing to let go and let’s just see what happens.” That seems like a short solution, but for me it was saying, “Let them drive the bus.”

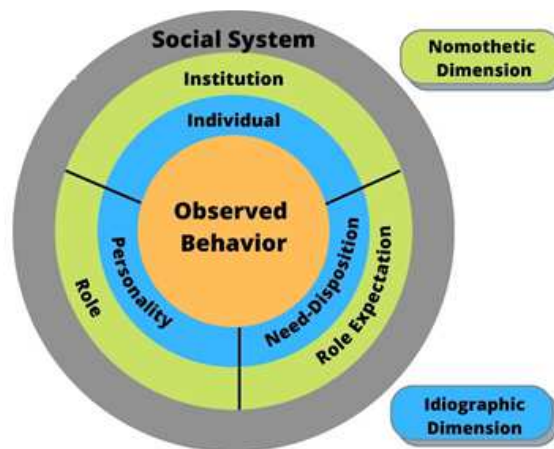
The teacher leaders that had experienced training did not internalizing the problems that they encountered, they were able to maintain professionalism and demonstrate efficacy to address challenges.

Interrelationship Between the Nomothetic and Idiographic Dimensions

The original visual model developed by Getzels and Guba (1957) was shared in Chapter I of this dissertation. The model showed that the interrelationship between nomothetic and idiographic dimensions have an equal influence on one another. The findings of my study do not support equal influence. After analyzing the findings of this study, I revised the model to more clearly demonstrate the interrelationship of these dimensions as revealed in this study.

Figure 5.1

Revised Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model According to Findings in This Study



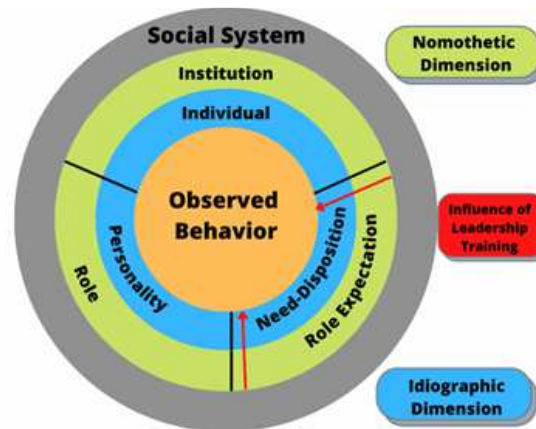
The instructional specialist role was new for the CPS social system. According to participants, the administration envisioned the role as a linchpin for initiating a cascading flow of events which would bridge the gap between the central office and the classroom teachers. Administrators' influence on teacher leaders within the institution is important to note. The way teachers were solicited to transition to a new role of teacher leader provided teachers with necessary courage to enact the decision. Changes in the nomothetic dimension directly affected the idiographic dimension, thus the observed

behavior of teacher leaders. In spite of an interrelationship between the two dimensions, the larger influence, in this study, on observed behavior can be attributed to the nomothetic dimension. This is evident because the influence of administrators and the creation of the instructional specialist position had to occur in order to produce the observed behavior.

For this study, if the social system (i.e., district) had recognized the nomothetic dimension's impact on the future success of these teacher leaders and had spent time and energy, accordingly, in establishing a job description of the role with clear role expectations, these teacher leaders may have experienced greater initial success and efficacy in their roles. While these teacher leaders were likely identified because of their drive for continual learning and because of their ability to develop relationships, having organizational support through training and a clear job description could have supported some of the challenges they faced. It is important to note that findings from this study indicate that training could influence the needs-disposition of individuals transitioning to the teacher leader role and could also affect how the individual responds to certain situations. Findings suggest that this nomothetic dimension, the district, could have supported the needs of these teacher leaders by integrating targeted leadership training for individuals as part of the teacher leader role expectation. The objective, then, could have been achieving a more desired and productive observed behavior of a teacher leader.

Figure 5.2

Revised Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model showing the Influence of Leadership Training



Comparison of Findings to Literature

Chapter II detailed research-based barriers to teacher leadership found within the literature that were also represented in the findings of this study. Nguyen and Hunter (2018) discussed feelings of resentment toward teacher leaders from teachers they serve based on fears that teacher leaders are trying to change the system. Most participants discussed interactions with challenging teachers and shared difficulties in developing trust and relationships with those teachers. Although there was a difference in how each group of teachers reacted to these interactions, it is widely accepted that most teacher leaders will encounter a similar barrier (Helterbran 2010). All participants in this study, both with training and without, discussed feelings of low self-efficacy about their ability to be a teacher leader. It is likely that it would be easy for teacher leaders to internalize interactions with negative and resistant teachers causing them to question their own ability. Struyve et al. (2014) found that teacher leaders “report how they struggle

obtaining recognition for their expertise and responsibility by their teacher colleagues and how this all has an impact on their self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, task perception and future perspective” (p. 230). Findings from the study reported in this dissertation support this aspect of the literature.

Two additional themes emerged from this study that connect its findings to the literature on teacher leadership: 1) teacher leaders have the drive to learn new things and 2) teacher leaders desire to form meaningful relationships with teachers they serve. These motivations were identified in the literature as some of the key attributes needed for teacher leaders. Ferris-Berg (2014) listed many characteristics for teacher leaders, two of which were functioning as learners and collaborators. Warren (2016) echoed the need for relationships between teacher leaders and the teachers they served, emphasizing the importance of building trust before coaching a teacher about their teaching process. These two traits were evident in both groups of teacher leaders in this study. Since literature supports these traits as important attributes for teacher leaders, it is important for administrators to recognize them as essential traits for individuals who wish to become teacher leaders.

Administrators are the force behind changes in school systems, and many times accountability measures drive those changes (Gonzalez, 2017; Maxcy, 2009; Peck & Reitzug, 2014). Findings in this study support the idea that administrators influence how teacher leaders are utilized in the district. Helterbran (2010) stated that a principal can be the key factor in determining if teacher leaders are effective. That notion could be extended to this study by considering that Bob, the superintendent, played a crucial role in creating the teacher leadership role and trying to change the culture of CPS to embrace

teacher leaders. Changing the district's culture is one of the most challenging aspects of starting a new teacher leadership role (Demir, 2015). Findings from this study showed that the impetus for this new role came from the superintendent. The fact that he approached each teacher about transitioning to the new role demonstrated that his influence was an essential aspect of implementing the teacher leadership role.

The development of teacher leaders is an emergent concept in the literature. Cheng and Szeto (2016) discovered that teachers transition into the role of teacher leader in one of two ways: 1) their principal asking them to lead a task or 2) a self-initiated effort to seek out professional development. The findings of this study validated both of these avenues. All participants were approached to assume the role of teacher leader, and three of the participants initiated their own leadership training. Gerstenschlager and Barlow (2019) conducted a single case study and concluded the lack of leadership training could impact the development of a teacher leader. This finding was evident in this study when looking at how participants with leadership training focused on finding solutions more than participants who had no training.

Implications

Implications for research, theory, and practice are highlighted in this section.

Implications for Research

The literature surrounding teacher leadership has gradually increased over the last 30 years. Research has shown the importance of teachers and their contribution to decision-making within school districts (Easley, 2016; Nguyen & Hunter, 2018; Peck & Reitzug, 2014). However, there is a need for additional research to explain how to

provide training to teachers who choose to transition from the classroom into teacher leadership roles. This study suggests that leadership training influences how teacher leaders mitigate barriers and respond to certain situations such as dealing with negative teachers and encountering problems classroom teachers might face. An important finding from this study is that teacher leaders who had leadership training were more solution-focused than those without the training. Additional research is needed to identify aspects of an effective leadership development program and how to support teacher efficacy for leadership.

This study contributed to the body of research indicating administrators' influence on implementing teacher leadership (Barth, 2001; Demir, 2015; Gonzalez, 2017; Helterbran, 2010; Maxcy, 2009; Peck & Reitzug, 2014). Further research should be conducted to determine how institutions can influence teacher leadership and to discover research-based processes to help encourage and empower teacher leaders.

Implications for Theory

The Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model (1957) was used to frame the findings of this qualitative comparative case study. While this model was established over a half a century ago, the basic tenets of the model hold true in today's world. The interrelationship of the nomothetic and ideographic dimensions of social systems is happening daily in education systems worldwide. Many of the dissertations that used this model, as discussed in Chapter II, had an increased focus on the role of the Social System (McLeod, 2000; Park, 2006; Sutton, 2020). Findings from this study, however, required an updated visual model of this theory to more accurately explain the findings. Study participants' perspectives and the interactions they described indicated that the first step

toward implementing teacher leaders in this school district was the decision made by the administration to implement the role in the institution. The influence of administrators—part of the nomothetic dimension—played a crucial role in teacher leaders' choice to transition into their new role, which subsequently affected the observed behavior. In other words, this study showed that although an interrelationship between the nomothetic and idiographic dimensions existed, the more important factor impacting the overall system was a decision made within the nomothetic dimension.

One aspect where the Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model fell short was taking into account the outside influence on an institution. An example of this is that it did not account for local, state, and federal government institutions and how those entities can affect the smaller institutions of a public school district. The more prominent institutions, and the policies they create, could have an effect all the way down to the observed behavior of individuals of smaller institutions.

After further analysis of the findings and another theory that could be used as a theoretical framework for additional studies is the Community of Practice. Wenger and Trayner (2015) define this phenomenon as, “Communities of practice are groups who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (p. 1). This theory could provide a beneficial lens in light of the finding that the community of teacher leaders was so important to the participants in this study.

Implications for Practice

This study provided many implications for influencing the practice of leveraging teacher leaders in school districts. Foremost, this study suggested a need for

administrators in this district to establish an official teacher leader role before they utilized the position to drive change. This decision would effect what Maxcy (2009) considered a “restructuring” of the system. More clearly defining the teacher leader position could provide necessary guidance and support for creating trust between teachers and administrators as their work toward achieving institutional goals. Teacher leaders are poised to change the “social-professional dynamic” (Struyve et al., 2014, p. 209) within a school district, which, in turn, could improve school culture and influence classroom instruction. This study suggests that teacher leaders assisted in creating a bridge between administrators and classroom teachers, thus is one way to provide support for classroom teachers and content support to improve classroom instruction.

This study also identified a need for administrators in this district to mentor and foster leadership abilities of individuals selected to fill teacher leader positions. Helterbran (2010) echoed this thought by saying administrators are one of the key factors in determining if teacher leaders will become effective. The findings of this study further demonstrate that administrators have an influence on persuading teachers to transition into a teacher leader role. The need was identified in this study for administrators to be purposeful in implementing teacher leadership positions and in realizing a need for structure, encouragement, and training to support teachers transitioning out of the classroom into a teacher leader role.

Finally, this study found that leadership training influenced future teacher leaders. Participants who completed leadership training took a different approach to overcoming barriers to their position. They were solution-focused in their thinking. Although not generalizable, this finding is highly relevant for practitioners

recognizing the need for teacher leader training within their district. These decisions occur in the nomothetic dimension of the social system to ensure all teacher leaders transitioning to teacher leaders are equally prepared for their new role.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study identified several important aspects of how teacher leaders perceive their ability to fill their role and how their experiences help them to transition out of the classroom into their new role of teacher leader. An important finding that applied to all participants was the administrators' influence in a teacher's decision to accept the role of teacher leader. More research is needed to determine how administrations can effectively create and implement teacher leadership into their districts. Given that research-based best practices can be identified, articulated, and established in this area, a generalizable model can guide school districts.

This study also examined the influence of leadership training and how it shaped teacher leaders' perceptions of their new role. This important finding identifies a need for further research exploring what types of leadership training are effective for preparing classroom teachers to be teacher leaders. Few studies have examined this area of research (Klein et al., 2019; Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017), and more is needed to determine effective teacher leader development and set a realistic training timetable. For example, knowing whether or not leadership training as a part of graduate programs aimed at encouraging classroom teachers to become teacher leaders is not well understood. Additionally, additional information is needed regarding the effectiveness of training that is embedded in the practice of becoming a teacher leader within district employment. While it is unrealistic to rely on only one type of leadership development

program for all teacher leaders, additional research could shed light on best practices for guiding districts decisions when implementing these positions.

Summary

Chapter V included a discussion of findings through a lens informed by the Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model (1957), including an in-depth look at the nomothetic dimension, idiographic dimension, and an interrelationship between the two. This chapter concluded with implications for research, practice, and theory. Future research studies were suggested. The study reported in this dissertation explained how training could prepare teachers moving from the classroom to fill the role of teacher leader with necessary skills. This work also verified research-based findings of the extent to which administrator influence can impact the development of teacher leaders.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What does being a “teacher leader” mean to you?
2. Will you briefly explain what drove you to become teacher leader?
3. What type of training did you receive, if any, that helped prepare you for being a teacher leader?
4. Suppose you were tasked with writing a job description for being a teacher leader, what would that job description look like?
5. What are some challenges or barriers you have encountered while being a teacher leader?
6. What role does a teacher leader play in your district?

Appendix B

Correlation of Research Question to Interview Questions

Research Questions	Correlating Interview Questions
In each group, how is teacher-leadership manifested?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ What does being a “teacher leader” mean to you? ❖ Will you briefly explain what drove you to become teacher leader?
In each group, how do teachers perceive their roles and expectations when becoming teacher-leaders?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Suppose you were tasked with writing a job description for being a teacher leader, what would that job description look like?
In each group, what obstacles have teacher leaders experienced and how have they addressed those challenges?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ What are some challenges or barriers you have encountered while being a teacher leader?
In each group, how has training or lack of training influenced teacher leader perceptions of their role?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ What type of training did you receive, if any, that helped prepare you for being a teacher leader?
How does the Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model explain the above?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ What role does a teacher leader play in your district?

Appendix C
Field Notes Template

Participant:

Location:

Date and Time:

- The physical setting

- The participants

- Activities and interactions

- Conversations

- Subtle factors, and

- Your own behavior

Appendix D

Photo Elicitation Prompts

1. Please bring one to two images, either ones you have found online or ones you have taken yourself, which expresses your perception of teacher leadership.
2. Please bring one to two images, either ones you have found online or ones you have taken yourself, which represents how prepared you felt to take on the role of a teacher leader.
3. Please bring one to two images, either ones you have found online or ones you have taken yourself, which represents any obstacles or barriers you encountered on your way to becoming a teacher leader.

Appendix E

Interview Protocol

General Instructions

Begin each interview with an introduction. Ask each participant to tell a little bit about themselves and their background before diving into the specific interview questions. Each interview will include a detailed physical description of the setting. Each interview will be recorded digitally.

Research Questions

Overarching Question

Are there differences in the manifestation of teacher leadership between those who have participated in teacher leadership development programs and those who have not?

1. In each group, how is teacher-leadership manifested?
2. In each group, how do teachers perceive their roles and expectations as teacher-leaders?
3. In each group, what obstacles have teacher leaders experienced and how have they addressed those challenges?
4. In each group, how has training or lack of training influenced teacher leader perceptions of their role?
5. How does the Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model explain the above?

Interview Questions

1. What does being a “teacher leader” mean to you?
2. Will you briefly explain what drove you to become teacher leader?

3. What type of training did you receive, if any, that helped prepare you for being a teacher leader?
4. Suppose you were tasked with writing a job description for being a teacher leader, what would that job description look like?
5. What are some challenges or barriers you have encountered while being a teacher leader?
6. What role does a teacher leader play in your district?

Post-Interview Instructions

Once the interview is completed, a transcription will be completed to analyze the interview content.

Appendix F

Interview Protocol for Photo-elicitation Interview

General Instructions

In order to provide participants adequate time to provide images for the photo-elicitation interview, I will email them about two weeks prior with the photo-elicitation prompts listed below. I will ask each participant to send me the images via email before our second face-to-face interview. I will print out each image separately and ask the interview questions listed below. After all of the images are discussed individually, I will present all of the images and ask about any connections the participants see. If the participants do not provide any images, I will first offer them an opportunity to use my computer to find images. If they are unwilling to look up images, I will provide various images found while doing basic searches of teacher leadership and ask the participants to pick the images from those provided.

Research Questions

Overarching Question

Are there differences in the manifestation of teacher leadership between those who have participated in teacher leadership development programs and those who have not?

1. In each group, how is teacher-leadership manifested?
2. In each group, how do teachers perceive their roles and expectations as teacher-leaders?
3. In each group, what obstacles have teacher leaders experienced and how have they addressed those challenges?

4. In each group, how has training or lack of training influenced teacher leader perceptions of their role?
5. How does the Getzels-Guba Social Systems Model explain the above?

Photo-elicitation Prompts

1. Please bring one to two images, either ones you have found online or ones you have taken yourself, which expresses your perception of teacher leadership.
2. Please bring one to two images, either ones you have found online or ones you have taken yourself, which represents how prepared you felt to take on the role of a teacher leader.
3. Please bring one to two images, either ones you have found online or ones you have taken yourself, which represents any obstacles or barriers you encountered on your way to becoming a teacher leader.

Interview Questions

1. Where did you locate this photo/image?
2. What types of searches were conducted in order to find this photo/image?
3. How does this image express your perception of teacher leadership?
4. How does this image show how you felt to take on the role of being a teacher leader?
5. How does this image represent the obstacles or barriers you encountered along the way?

Post-Interview Instructions

Once the interview is completed, a transcription will be completed to analyze the interview content.

Appendix G

IRB Approval



Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: 05/01/2019
Application Number: ED-19-56
Proposal Title: From Classroom Teacher to Teacher Leader: A Case Study

Principal Investigator: Sarah Vann
Co-Investigator(s):
Faculty Adviser: Kathy Curry
Project Coordinator:
Research Assistant(s):

Processed as: Exempt
Exempt Category:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

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 45CFR46.

This study meets criteria in the Revised Common Rule, as well as, one or more of the circumstances for which continuing review is not required. As Principal Investigator of this research, you will be required to submit a status report to the IRB triennially.

The final versions of any recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are available for download from IRBManager. 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 approved by the IRB. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, adviser, other research personnel, 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 unanticipated and/or adverse events to the IRB Office promptly.
4. Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete or when you are no longer affiliated with Oklahoma State University.

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 the IRB Office at 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Sincerely,
Oklahoma State University IRB

VITA

Sarah Danette Vann

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Dissertation: FROM CLASSROOM TEACHER TO TEACHER LEADER: A CASE
STUDY

Major Field: School Administration

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education in School
Administration at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in
December, 2021.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Educational
Technology at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in 2011.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Science Education at
Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma in 2002.

Experience: Secondary Science teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal

Professional Memberships: The Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School
Administration (CCOSA)