Potential Influences of Action Research on the Developing Identities and Practices of Teacher Leaders

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Abstract

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This qualitative methods research study seeks to better understand how teacher leaders develop their identity and practices through an examination of their efforts undertaking action research in a mentored and supported cohort setting with ongoing, job-embedded support. Specifically, this study seeks to explore how engagement in action research may have helped promote the shift from teacher to teacher leader. As teacher leaders take on action research, their work may also serve to prompt shifts in identity and practice as they develop an inquiry stance as a way to consider and approach their work. This study employs case studies of six teacher leaders who conducted mentored action research, drawing upon their work at various point throughout the process, both while they were conducting their research and after. These case studies illuminated these teacher leaders' learning and development. As such, this study explored the use of action research as a tool for personal and professional development, and its outcomes for teacher leaders.

Keywords: *Teacher leadership, action research, career pathways, leadership development, distributed leadership, personal and professional development, job embedded professional development, mentored action research, identity development, school leadership, career ladder*

To the teacher leaders in this study.

Your willingness to open your hearts, minds, and lay bare your practices

made this work possible.

Thank you for what you have taught me, and the field,

and for what you do to support teachers and teaching every day.

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CHAPTER 1.

The Research Problem: Understanding How Teachers Learn to Lead Through Action Research

Teacher leadership holds promise as important work with the potential to support and grow teachers and carry the weight of some of the work of instructional leadership and instructional improvement. In recent years, research on teacher leadership has been expanded as scholars have noted the potential for teachers to act as instructional leaders through collaborative work and relationships (Camburn, 2009; Smylie & Denny, 1990; Taylor, Goeke, Klein, Onore, & Geist, 2011; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Recently, there has been more attention paid to teacher leadership (including funding and parameters governing their work, such as job descriptions, formalized positions put in place in districts) to push the work forward so as to make a broader impact on student achievement and to create agents of change within the system (Camburn, 2009; Smylie & Denny, 1990; Taylor et al., 2011). The call for teachers to move into leadership positions is echoed by administrators, policymakers, and researchers, who note that teachers are needed to step into leadership roles because of their intimate knowledge of students, subject matter, and teaching (Lieberman, 1995). A need for teacher leadership has been well-established as a means to address numerous reform initiatives and improve achievement.

Schools require varied and complex leadership arrangements and have increasingly moved towards a more distributed view of leadership; the principal is no longer the singular, key "instructional leader" (Portin, Alejano, Knapp, & Marzolf, 2006). As the scope of the work in schools becomes broader and more demanding —for example, as demands put on schools to increase student achievement grow, and as new teacher evaluation systems further complicate

the role of the principal—administrators have called on others to share in this leadership work. These developments come at a time when conceptions of school leadership are broadening and opportunities for teachers' professional learning are expanding (Portin, Russell, Samuelson, & Knapp, 2013; Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002). New ways to lead and learn, alongside teachers as peers, have grown in recent years.

There is a growing need for teacher leadership to help meet these demands and to aid teachers in learning how to lead. In its current state, the work of teacher leadership is often somewhat limited in scope, as are the opportunities for developing the skills of leading others' efforts to improve their own practice. Fullan (1995) and others note that there are many barriers to teacher leadership, and that the basic structures of schooling (i.e., isolation, lack of collaboration, egalitarian norms of teaching, the principal as singular leader, principals with limited training in how to effectively grow and use teacher leaders) have been an impediment (Firestone & Martinez, 2007; Little, 2003; Margolis & Doring, 2012; Pounder 2006; Smylie & Denny, 1990; Stoelinga, 2008; Taylor et al., 2011; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Despite these obstacles to teacher leadership, there is also the possibility of creating many new opportunities for teachers to grow, develop, and become capable of spanning the boundaries of teaching and leading, facilitating others' learning, and guiding schools in meaningful change efforts.

Becoming a teacher leader is a challenging undertaking, one that is sometimes in opposition with school cultures and climates (Cohen & Ball, 1999; Lieberman & Miller, 2000). The necessity for teacher leadership is in conflict with "a teacher culture that does not easily acknowledge that a colleague may have knowledge to share" (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p. 8). Teacher leadership requires a different set of knowledge and skills, apart from classroom teaching, to lead adults and facilitate adult learning. Experienced, accomplished teachers are

often recruited to become teacher leaders, yet too often we assume that effective teachers will be effective teacher leaders, and that these teachers need little support as they transition into their new roles. Transitioning into teacher leadership work requires more than just acquiring additional competencies (e.g., the abilities to work with adult learners, facilitate grade-level meetings, or provide feedback to other teachers about their practice) (Chval et al., 2010). In order for teacher leadership to be effective, a climate of trust, long-term commitment to teacher leadership, professional development specific to coaching, and administrative support is needed (Loucks-Horsley, Love, Stiles, Mundry, & Hewson, 2003). There is often a mismatch between this idealized climate of trust and support and the realities and expectations that teacher leaders face.

Little is known about how teachers learn to lead. While being an excellent classroom teacher is often considered adequate preparation for these roles (by principals, human resource departments, and administrators that would promote and hire these excellent teachers and place them in these leadership roles), being an excellent teacher alone is not enough. Learning how to be an effective teacher leader is as challenging and complex a task as learning to teach is, requiring ongoing professional and cognitively demanding learning (Gibson, 2005). Teacher leaders must develop richly elaborated knowledge specific to their work.

Teacher leadership is a new and different job, requiring a distinct set of skills and knowledge to lead one's peers. Joyce and Showers (2002) note that teacher leaders need to be able to perform their role(s) in a collaborative and nonjudgmental manner. Pounder (2006) notes that, "When teacher leadership is conceived of as a process rather than a positional concept, it is more difficult to articulate because it comprises an array of behaviors and characteristics rather than formalized positional duties" (p. 534). This process involves a shift in thinking and ways of

working, and a shift in the teacher leader's practice. Teacher leaders need support systems and opportunities for job-embedded and ongoing professional learning (Sato, Wei, & Darling-Hammond, 2008; Valli & Buese, 2007). It is necessary to support teachers in acquiring the skills and knowledge to go beyond being masters of classroom instructional content and pedagogy to prepare for these new roles (Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010; Margolis & Doring, 2012). How this is done in the current landscape is unclear.

One powerful way in which teachers leaders are encouraged to reflect upon and improve their practice and skills is through an inquiry process. Action research projects that employ a form of structured, self-reflective, systematic inquiry process (Lee, Sachs, & Wheeler, 2014; Lieberman, 1995; Mills, 2010) represent one method of inquiry. In his discussion of inquiry, Wells (1999) notes that "the aim of inquiry is not 'knowledge for its own sake' but the disposition and ability to use the understandings so gained to act informedly and responsibly in the situations that may be encountered both now and in the future" (p. 121). Inquiry, conceived of in this way, has the potential to change teacher leaders' dispositions, abilities, and practices.

This study intends to explore the use of action research as a vehicle for teacher leadership development, focusing on how teacher leaders develop their identities, practices and skills as leaders through their participation in action research. A goal of this study is to shine a light into action research and consider how teacher leaders' leadership practices may change through inquiry based projects.

What follows is a dissertation study organized into six chapters. The first chapter presents an argument for this research problem; the second chapter grounds the research problems and way of conceptualizing it more thoroughly in relevant literature; the third chapter describes and justifies the methodology chosen for answering the research questions presented in

the first chapter; the fourth and fifth chapters present and analyze findings on teacher leaders engaged in action research; the sixth chapter provides concluding reflections about the findings, as well as illuminating the contributions of the study to both the field of academic research and educational practice.

The rest of Chapter 1 presents an argument for the study. In the sections that follow, I describe what the research asserts about the work of teacher leadership, what we know about the problems teacher leaders tend to face, what is known about the potential promising impacts of teacher leadership, and what is known about how teacher leaders learn vis-à-vis sociocultural theories of learning.

Locating the Research Problem:

How Teachers Learn to Become Teacher Leaders

In this section of the dissertation, I locate teacher leadership within a broader movement in schooling and school reform towards more distributed approaches to leadership. In that context, I describe the nature of teacher leadership, and note its promise for improving the quality of teaching and learning. But that promise is often not realized, because of particular challenges facing this work, which I review next. To engage in this work and realize its promise implies, in part, significant new learning on the part of teachers who are making the transition to teacher leader. Drawing on the limited available literature related to teacher leadership development, I point out some gaps in our current understanding of how this development can productively take place.

Context for Teacher Leaders' Work:
Distributed Leadership in Contemporary School Reform

In recent years, schools have moved toward an increasingly distributed view of leadership. Definitions of teacher leadership have moved away from formal positions and towards communal, distributed, and relational notions (Smylie et al., 2002). In the past, the principal was often looked to as the singular, charismatic leader (Berg, Carver, & Mangin, 2013), someone who could "carry the load" of instructional leadership. The model of the singular, heroic leader is at last being replaced with leadership that is focused upon teams rather than individuals and places a greater emphasis upon teachers as leaders (Harris, 2003). This movement towards a more distributed pattern of leadership in schools is a natural response to the demands on schools for reform efforts, changes in practices, and an increased need for teacher support (Crawford, 2002; Knapp, Copland, Honig, Plecki, & Portin, 2010; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson; 2004). In terms of school leadership, a collaborative or team approach is necessary to meet the ever-growing demands on schools. In this regard, distributed leadership can be seen as "moving the leadership role from one individual to a community of professionals committed to improving student learning" (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p. 2). With distributed leadership comes a perspective that finds teacher leaders in a position to positively influence individuals and organizations that can influence student learning (Berg et al., 2013). Schools require new and different forms of leadership to support communities of practice amongst teachers.

This movement towards distributed leadership provides a context where teacher leaders are recognized as critical resources for instructional improvement (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Killion & Harrison, 2006; Lieberman & Miller, 2000; Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008). Teacher

leaders work alongside colleagues. They are well-placed to help guide and shape the culture and norms that contribute to ongoing professional learning and continuous improvement in their schools (Beachum & Dentith, 2004; Ippolito, 2010; Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010). According to Berg et al. (2013) distributed leadership arrangements offer individuals greater opportunities to learn from one another, while also enabling the organization to capitalize on multiple sources of expertise and experience, reducing chances for error and strengthening decision-making capacity (Louis et al., 2004). Teacher leadership thus creates an additive effect, where distributed leadership provides "relatively unlimited resources" (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006, p. 13), by capitalizing on the capacity of teachers to offer guidance and support to their colleagues. The need for teacher leadership is thus tied to shared-leadership as a means to address increased pressures for instructional improvement (Elmore, 1995; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). Teacher leaders are needed to support the many ongoing instructional and reform initiatives in schools.

In these ways, the context for school-based instructional leadership, including the use of teacher leaders as instructional leaders, is asserting itself in increasingly prominent ways that are intimately connected to what instructional leaders try to do and how they approach their work (Portin et al., 2013). The local and state policy environment also contributes to the demanding context for instructional leadership practice that is distributed, shared, and includes teacher leaders as peers to carry out these reforms.

What Teacher Leadership Is and How the Work Is Done

Alongside the scholarship on distributed leadership, a body of work has slowly developed that sheds light on certain aspects of teacher leadership, and from this work we know some things about the nature of this kind of leadership work and the circumstances under which it

takes place. In their 2004 review of the literature, York-Barr and Duke noted that teacher leadership has been under-researched and that the field has been focused predominantly on teacher leaders' qualifications, duties, context(s) and conditions. Additional studies document indirect effects; for example, finding that teacher leadership can contribute to greater teacher satisfaction (Johnson & Landman, 2000; Taylor & Bogotch, 1994). Teacher leadership is a well-documented, regular practice in schools, yet it varies greatly from context to context.

York-Barr and Duke (2004) define teacher leadership as "the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement" (pp. 287-288). Classroom teachers who exercise this leadership may do so formally or informally, within designated roles that release them full or part-time from the classroom (or not at all), or simply thorough extra-classroom activities whereby they work with colleagues to improve teaching. Teacher leadership work provides a means to expand roles for accomplished teachers (Marks & Printy, 2003; Valli & Buese, 2007). These roles may be more formal, such as a full-release position of teacher on special assignment (TOSA) as an instructional coach or facilitator of a specific subject or content knowledge for a school district or building, or less formal, like being asked to lead professional development, to lead as the department head or to take on an in-building mentoring role in addition to all of the regular teaching duties of a full-time teacher. Teacher leaders are called upon to assume roles as mentors, specialists, facilitators and coaches, taking on more explicit leadership roles within schools and districts (Berg et al., 2013; Gallucci et al., 2010; Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008). Many of these roles have been increasingly formalized in recent years, with mandates, funding, and parameters attached to govern this work and outline the potential outcomes. Thus, teachers serve

as leaders when they interact with colleagues around instructional matters, whether they do so through formal, strategic roles or of their own volition (Berg et al., 2013). They are at once both colleagues and leaders, acting in the often un-defined or ill-defined spaces in between.

To achieve alignment and facilitate better communication between administrators and teachers, teacher leaders draw upon their relationships with their peers (Firestone & Martinez, 2007; Portin & Knapp, 2010). The success of teacher leadership within a school can also be influenced by a number of interpersonal factors, such as relationships with other teachers and school management (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). The importance of these is evident, both with respect to teachers' ability to influence colleagues and with respect to developing productive relations with school management, who may in some cases feel threatened by teachers taking on leadership roles (Harris & Muijs, 2005). There is a need for teacher leaders to work in these spaces to help facilitate stronger communities of practice.

Teacher leaders use their instructional skills and peer relationships to support the adoption of new classroom teaching practices (Camburn, 2009). They work alongside teachers to promote instructional best practices. Teacher leaders model and promote professional learning that leads to increased instructional expertise through collaboration with their colleagues (Margolis & Doring, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Their work lies in the space in between, as they facilitate this professional learning in school communities through collaboration. When teachers engage through positions of leadership, school improvement reform initiatives are more successful (Camburn, 2009; Marks & Printy, 2003: Stoelinga, 2008). There is a clear need for teachers to engage in leadership in new ways.

Teacher leadership has been developed over time and is often viewed in stages or waves (Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000). Initially, teacher leadership was related to the hierarchy within

the school and treated the notion as close to the teaching role, where supervisors and head teachers were the typical model (Pounder, 2006). These positions implied a structure of power that created isolation between teacher leaders and teachers, much like the barrier between teachers and administrators. This phase of teacher leadership focused on efficiency and effectiveness of the system, and did not work toward influencing others or practicing instructional leadership (Kelley, 2011). The second level of teacher leadership gave teachers some roles mostly related to their teaching functions (team leaders, curriculum developers). The third wave brings in theory about teachers' leadership capabilities, their legitimacy as professional who build up their professionalism, teaching practices and their abilities to contribute to school improvement. According to the notion of teacher leadership in the third wave, teachers as leaders "help redesign schools, mentor their colleagues, engage in problem solving at the school level, and provide professional growth activities for colleagues" (Silva et al., 2000, p. 779). In the most recent or fourth wave, Pounder (2006) linked teacher leadership with transformational leadership, noting that teacher leadership can serve to empower of teachers and lead to improved practices, empowering teachers to be responsible for their teaching and their students' learning. Pounder (2006) and others also discusses how teacher leadership is linked to education reform. Teachers as leaders can contribute to the success of the school to "guide fellow teachers as well as the school at large toward higher standards of achievement and individual responsibility for school reform" (Silva et al., 2000, p. 779). This is because they are the front line professionals who know classroom issues, school's culture and the issues that relate to teaching as a legitimate profession and to them as legitimate leaders.

The Promise of Teacher Leadership

As suggested by the literature, teacher leadership holds promise to impact school cultures and climates, teachers' instructional practice, and ultimately student learning (Portin et al., 2006: York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Through the work of teacher leaders, peers and colleagues gain opportunities to learn and grow, and to improve and change their instructional practice. York-Barr and Duke note that, "Teacher leadership has been reported to have effects on teacher practices at the classroom level" (p. 289). Teachers leaders have touted the benefits of this work, citing personal and professional growth and development that occur in these roles. These positive outcomes of this teacher leadership work have been documented as teacher leaders have taken on new and different challenges (Marks & Printy, 2003; Valli & Buese, 2007). Through various roles and in different contexts, teachers are being called upon to serve as leaders of their peers. In addition, as Lieberman and Miller (2000) note, teacher leaders can be change agents, spanning boundaries as leaders as they maintain connections with teaching and students. At the same time, teacher leaders are contributing to the capacity building of teachers (Swinnerton, 2007). Teacher leaders thus have the potential to impact powerful school change through their unique position situated alongside their colleagues as peers.

The fact that teacher leadership can have a positive impact on schools has been documented, and is also suggested by researchers, though a definitive body of empirical evidence of effects has yet to be assembled. York-Barr & Duke's (2004) review of the literature suggests both the kinds of effects that are possible and the mechanisms of achieving these effects, by providing a model of teacher leadership where teacher leaders influence individuals, teams and groups, and organizational capacity, through both formal and informal channels, to improve practices around teaching and learning, and ultimately student outcomes. The evidence

from the school improvement literature consistently highlights that effective leaders exercise an indirect influence on schools' capacity to improve upon the achievement of students, though this influence does not necessarily derive from senior managers, but can also at least partly lie in strengths of middle level leaders and teachers (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Harris, 2003). Combining the efforts of school administrators with those of school-based instructional coaches, staff developers, and a growing cadre of teacher leaders brings together a potentially powerful combination of expertise and perspectives to bear on instructional and learning improvement in schools (Portin et al., 2013). This work is an important leverage point and growth area for teachers, students, and schools.

Challenges of Teacher Leadership

Opportunities to realize the promise of teacher leadership is increasing, as the practice of teacher leadership is becoming more widespread and institutionalized and is increasingly become a part of school systems, both here in the United States and abroad, as this work has been done and documented in many other countries' school systems. Yet, despite the growing interest in and prevalence of teacher leadership, there are still many challenges regarding the difficulty of implementing and sustaining this work. Oftentimes, complex organizational factors and entrenched school norms halt the progress of teacher leadership work (Firestone & Martinez, 2007; Little, 2003; Margolis & Doring, 2012; Scribner & Bradley-Levine, 2010; Smylie & Denny, 1990; Stoelinga, 2008; Valli & Buesse, 2007). For teacher leadership work to be successful there needs to be structures and supports in place to drive the teacher leaders' professional growth, development, and learning. These supports are necessary in order for teacher leaders to influence change and to be effective practitioners.

As teachers begin to take on leadership, they often struggle against the egalitarian norms of their profession (Scribner & Bradley-Levine, 2010; Smylie & Denny, 1990; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). They may also battle internal discord as they struggle to remain credible to their colleagues as a peer-leader while forming new identities as teacher leaders (Chval et al., 2010; Smylie & Denny, 1990). Scholars have cited the ambiguous and challenging nature of the work of teacher leadership (Gallucci et al., 2010; Smylie, 1994; Swinnerton, 2007; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The lack of a clear definition of teacher leadership is another challenge that compounds the difficulty of this work (Smylie, 1994; York-Barr & Duke, 2004), as there are somewhat formalized roles such as coach or facilitator, yet also informal and hybrid roles (Margolis & Doring, 2012). A closer look at these challenges reveals both the difficulty of the task itself and the complexities of the context in which the work is done.

Research suggests that persistent cultural and organizational barriers constrain the widespread development and practice of teacher leadership (Firestone & Martinez, 2007; Little, 2003; Margolis & Doring, 2012; Pounder, 2006; Smylie & Denny, 1990; Stoelinga, 2008; Taylor et al., 2011; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). First, the roles of teacher leaders themselves are often organizationally ambiguous and not well understood or accepted in the traditional ecology of the school workplace. Hence, these roles or positions raise a number of complex issues about how to gain and sustain the legitimacy and goodwill that are necessary for effective leadership work (Knapp et al., 2014). Assuming a teacher leadership role for the most part challenges traditional norms of school life, such as norms of privacy and noninterference that exist among many teachers (Lortie, 1975; Murphy, 2005), which can be a source of tension between teacher leaders and their classroom-based colleagues. There are limited models and mentors to show the way, guide practice, and help develop and sustain this work through transition into these new roles.

These tensions that challenge traditional norms are often realized and experienced only after the teacher has taken on a new role. Little is done to aid in this change and once these tensions surface, it is difficult to know what can or should be done to overcome them.

Second, teacher leaders often have what appear to be competing goals, as they experience tension around the desire to collaborate and the need for swift instructional improvement (Gibson, 2006). There is also a perceived taboo in the teaching profession against one teacher "elevating" himself or herself above the others (Barth, 2013). Some teacher leaders encounter resistance from colleagues, who question whether a teacher (particularly if he or she is young) has greater expertise (Danielson, 2013). There may also on occasion be conflicts between groups of teachers, such as those that do and do not take on leadership roles, which can lead to estrangement among teachers (Lieberman, 1995; Clemson-Ingram & Fessler, 1997). When teachers take on leadership roles, they are positioned in complex ways between their own and others' frameworks, beliefs, and understandings about instructional work (Leander & Osborn, 2008). Again, these complexities often only come to light once teachers step into these roles and start to carry out their work. Management of these tensions is challenging as these invisible (not seen) but very real (strongly felt) barriers can stand in the way of the work.

Even with the large number of teacher leaders and recent growth in this field, the roles have been described as variable, locally defined (Taylor et al., 2011), and highly ambiguous (Blanchovicz, Fogelberg, & Obrochta, 2005). Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) have defined teacher leadership as "Teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved educational practice" (p. 5). This general definition includes three essential components: expertise in teaching, ability to collaborate with educators, and capacity to

influence instructional practice through relationships. As this work is primarily grounded in relationships, and not in formal positions, I assert that teacher leadership differs sharply from supervisory leadership (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008). According to Aguilar (2013), There is perhaps no more critical factor in the success of a coaching relationship than trust. Teacher leaders work alongside their peers and are uniquely positioned as such, as they do not take on the supervisory work of evaluation or supervision typically reserved for principal or administrative leadership. Teacher leaders exist primarily to support their teacher colleagues and instructional best practices in teaching and learning, influencing others toward improved instructional practice.

Most recent research on teacher leadership characterizes the work as either highly promising in its potential to influence instruction or highly problematic in its actual implementation. Given certain conditions, recent empirical studies have documented that this work does appear to have a positive influence on student learning (Matsumura, Garnier, Correnti, Junker, & Bickel, 2010; McCrary, 2011) and teacher implementation of instructional best practices (McCrary, 2011). On the flip side, research also points to the fact that coaches face difficulty when attempting to shift teacher instruction through their interpersonal work with teachers as lateral leaders (Rainville & Jones, 2008). Included in these challenges are problems of establishing legitimacy, power, and learning to push their peers in an egalitarian profession. Other researchers (i.e., Gallucci et al., 2010) have noted that coaches are often depicted as "static entities" who either know how to navigate problems and influence instructional change, or those who do not. As it stands, in the landscape of teacher leadership, we lack research that explores how coaches *learn* to navigate these problems in the context of their daily work, and what guides that learning. The current study attempts to begin to fill this gap.

The net effect of these forces and conditions is that the promise of teacher leadership is often not as fully realized as it might be. What is more, these challenges speak to the substantial *learning* task that new teacher leaders face: what do they need to learn in order to do this work well? What can support their learning?

Gaps in Our Understanding of Teacher Leaders' Learning

Scholars have noted the need for more attention to be paid to teacher leadership for some time (Barth, 2001; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Especially noticeable is a lack of research on the forms of training and development that new teacher leaders might need to approach their complex leadership work in productive ways. The literature on teacher leadership remains scattered, and empirical research on the topic is limited in depth (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). While a range of professional development materials offer guidance regarding teacher leadership skills and knowledge (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009), there still is a dearth of research synthesizing across cases. Much of the research includes case studies, but they are somewhat limited in scope.

Although numerous articles and books advocate for teacher leadership (Lieberman & Miller, 2000; Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008; Spillane, Camburn, & Stitziel Pareja, 2007; York-Barr & Duke, 2004); few, if any, focus on *how* teachers learn to lead. Smylie and Denny (1990) describe this challenge:

> [Teacher leadership development] involves more than the design of new work roles and efforts to develop individuals' skills to perform them. It involves a range of personal responses and organizational factors that are likely to mediate how these new roles are defined and performed by individual teacher leaders and how effective these roles will be in achieving their objectives. (p. 238)

This range of personal responses and the resulting mediation of roles are part of the focus of this study. Because of these challenges, variation in the effectiveness of teacher leaders in achieving their objectives does exist.

Teacher leaders are asked to take on new work roles without clear training in this new work. Skills such as leading groups and workshops, collaborative work, mentoring, teaching adults, working with data and inquiry, and collaborating with others are among the areas of professional learning that can be incorporated into professional development to help teachers adapt to the new roles (Barth, 1998; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). While their authority and credibility as leaders is often based on their perceived expertise in instruction and classroom practice, teachers may have limited preparation to facilitate *adult* learning and professional development (York-Barr & Duke, 2004), and they often have little or no support, once in these roles, to help them develop skills in these areas. In short, arrangements for teacher leadership tend not to recognize that teacher leaders "are asked to take on roles with their peers that could challenge the most gifted leader" (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p. 45). The lack of structures that support teacher leaders' work contributes to a lack of growth, falsely limited potential and decreased ability to impact others.

Teachers who exercise leadership are not automatic experts who can model and guide ambitious "best practices" and support adult professional learning. Teacher leadership requires a specific set of knowledge and skills, such as gathering and interpreting student data or engaging teachers in instructional dialogue. The skills and knowledge associated with teacher leadership require capacities that go beyond the mastery of classroom instructional content and pedagogy (Gallucci et al., 2010; Margolis & Doring, 2012). According to Aguilar (2013) and Pounder (2006), a specific set of skills and knowledge exist that define teacher leadership. Also, recent

creations and publication of documents guiding model teacher leadership standards, such as Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession's Teacher Leadership Skills Framework (CSTP, 2009), Teacher Leader Model Standards (TLEC, 2011), and Leading Educator's (2014) new Competency Framework for Teacher Leaders, have attempted to outline the specific sets of knowledge and skills that teacher leaders possess. There are significant new pressures for these specific instructional practices of teacher leadership that constitute transformative instructional change. There is a substantial need for ongoing and embedded teacher professional learning in order to accomplish the ambitious goals of teacher leadership within a reform agenda (Aguilar, 2013; Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, & Orr, 2009; Pounder, 2006; Valli & Buese, 2007). These pressures are the result of recent policy initiatives that focus on teaching and learning (such as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), new teacher evaluation systems, and student assessments such as Smarter Balanced).

The trajectory of how a teacher becomes a teacher leader is not clearly defined. Much of the literature on learning to lead is focused on the principalship, while little is focused on teachers' development as they become leaders. Paredes Scribner and Bradley-Levine (2010) note that, "In fact, until recently, teacher leaders had few opportunities to engage in formal leadership development" (p. 751). This formal leadership development should engage teachers in inquiry and reflection, and incorporate collaboration into this work. Formal leadership development for teacher leaders needs to be supported and ongoing, and this work also needs to be meaningfully connected to other school and district work (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Hawley & Valli, 1999). Professional development in this vein aims to support teachers in reconceptualizing beliefs and practices, aiming for "transformative" professional development (Cohen & Ball, 1999; Thompson & Zeuli, 1999). Professional development guiding teacher

leadership is limited and often nonexistent as teachers learn to navigate these foreign and difficult roles.

Little is known about how the transition from teacher to teacher leader occurs. As the preceding discussion suggests, several different aspects of this transition are involved, each with potential implications for the dynamics of the professional learning, and the kinds of experiences or activities that would support it. I assert the following, regarding the transtion from teacher to leader. First, the transition to teacher leader necessitates a *developing a grasp of particular skills* that help teacher colleagues recognize areas of possible improvement, among them, a facility with data, capacity to provide observation-based feedback, and an understanding of how adult learners are likely to engage with such matters. Second, the transition involves *finding natural arenas and occasions for interaction with colleagues* around specific questions of instructional improvement, especially in light of the organizational and cultural conditions that make teacher leaders' roles ambiguous or poorly understood. Third, the transition entails *taking on a leadership identity* by people who formerly have not thought of themselves as such (and who are part of an egalitarian culture that discourages teachers from thinking of themselves as leaders). Finally, the transition benefits from *constructing evidence of impact*—a way for both the teacher leader and the colleagues they are working with to demonstrate what has resulted from their time together. There is a growing body of research around specific teacher leader skills and knowledge. There has been an attempt in recent years to synthesize this body of knowledge around teacher leadership; CSTP's Teacher Leadership Skills Framework (2009), the Teacher Leader Model Standards (TLEC, 2011), and Leading Educator's new Competency Framework for Teacher Leaders (2014) are all documented attempts at synthesizing this work. These works all echo and include components of the skills and knowledge of teacher leadership that I mention

above. The five previously outlined aspects of the transition from teacher to teacher leader that I researched, named, and identify above can be addressed in more than one way by those who wish to support the development of teacher leaders, but a particular promising vehicle for this learning may reside in engaging in action research cycles, which I turn to next.

Action Research and Teacher Leadership Development

Action research has been a practice among educators for many years, with a great deal written about inquiry-based professional development since the 1980s (Ponte, 2005), and various different conceptions of teachers as researchers emerging in the literature. Action research initiated by teachers has grown over recent decades, even in the current educational climate of increased pressure regarding measurable outcomes for students (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Lee et al., 2014; Meyers & Rust, 2003). Many have written about and studied the promising preliminary effects of teachers engaging in self-study forms of research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001, 2009; Lieberman, 1995). In general, the action research literature focuses on teachers conducting research on their own practices, within their classroom or school community. Rarely has it included teacher leaders taking on action research and working with colleagues in new and different ways to study their work.

In this next section, I will first discuss what action research is as a process, a way of thinking, and a means to approaching leadership work. Embedded within action research is the purpose of action research for greater understanding and improvement, and the adoption of inquiry as stance. Next, I will talk about leadership growth through action research and the achievement of critical, democratic goals, including the amplification of teacher leaders' voices, through action research.

What Action Research Entails

Action research is a process that involved self-reflection and inquiry, taken together. It provides a way for educators to shine a light into their practices to solve problems and come away with new understandings around their work. It also involves working within systems, with others; there is a social nature or aspect to the work. Carr and Kemmis (1986/1997) define action research as:

> a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, their understandings of these practices, and the situation in which the practices are carried out. (p. 162)

As such, it is a sociocultural undertaking. Action research is a cyclical process that occurs within a specific context. This work involves identifying problems of practice, gathering data, considering and implementing interventions, gathering more data, and reflection throughout the process on both the process itself and the outcomes.

The purpose of action research is often defined in terms of "understanding and improving"—increasing understanding of one's own practice and at the same time improving that practice (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 162). This work takes place within bounded systems, as schools, classrooms, districts and practices are all fair game for investigation through action research. By linking understanding to improvement, Carr and Kemmis emphasize that professional knowledge is developed when teachers reconstruct their practice(s) that occurred within these systems (thus reinforcing the sociocultural nature of the work). In that sense, professional knowledge is experimental, meaning that it is a matter of trying things out, evaluating them, and then adjusting them; it is a matter of dialectic between "retrospective analyses and prospective action" (p. 185) that occur in a specific context. This view of

professional knowledge ties into Schön's view (1991), that professional knowledge is developed through a process of reframing and solving problems. Schön connects this idea of experiencing discrepancy with the idea that teachers have unconscious, implicit insights (knowing-in-action), which they can become aware of through reflection. Professional knowledge is not something that is lying ready and waiting to be discovered; it is actively constructed by teachers (Ponte, 2002). The unconscious is made conscious, and knowledge is actively constructed through the processes of action research.

One of the outcomes of the work of action research is the adoption of an inquiry stance as a way to approach problems of practice. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) define *inquiry as stance* as "a way of knowing and being in the world of educational practice" (p. viii). They suggest that practitioner research is "a continuous process with the ultimate purpose of enriching students' learning and life chances" (p. viii). As action research falls under the umbrella of practitioner research, this family of research methodologies is intended to pursue action (or change) and research (or understanding) simultaneously (Mills, 2010; Stringer, 2008). The processes of this knowledge in action and pursuit of understanding define action research.

The next section highlights the power of action research, noting the specific benefits to teacher leaders' growth and development and how action research builds leadership.

How Action Research Applies to Teacher Leaders' Work and Development

As a form of structured, self-reflective, systematic inquiry (Lieberman, 1995; Mills, 2010) action research can be used by teacher leaders to understand and resolve problems of practice, develop a disposition to inquire, and study their practices—all skills, knowledge, and dispositions of leadership. The CSTP's Teacher Leadership Skills Framework (2009) and the

Teacher Leader Model Standards (TLEC, 2011) note the importance of the adoption of these critical elements of teacher leadership. In describing the forms that action research takes, Ponte (2002) notes that educators use action research as a way to reconstruct their own and others' actions and the situations in which they are operating. To do so, they create guiding focus questions and use data that has been systematically gathered, analyzed, and interpreted. Creating guiding focus questions and data use, as outlined here, are part of a skill-set of leaders, as identified by the Teacher Leadership Skills Framework (2010) and the Teacher Leadership Skills Framework (CTSP, 2009). Ponte (2002) further notes that through action research, teacher leaders reflect both on educational outcomes and on the processes that lead to those outcomes. Through this process, teacher leaders become researchers, developing their inquiry skills and knowledge and practices around gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data, as they inquire into their own practice, as leaders of their own learning in context.

Action research has special advantages for the new learning that emerging teacher leaders need to do. Through action research, teacher leaders can gain greater understanding of their own work, the work of others, the work of systems, and more. Systematic inquiry into teacher leadership practice has produced the ability to analyze data to inform judgments, to plan for action, to facilitate collaboration among colleagues, and to reflect on leadership work (Gallucci, Koontz, Forman, Fukano, & Hoff, 2012; Lieberman & Friedrich, 2010; Ross et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2011). These changes in an individuals' learning and practice and in school culture are difficult to measure. Inquiry as stance is hard to identify, and it is hard to measure the value and worth of teacher leaders developing these inquiry-based practices. At the same time, these changes in invidiuals' learning and practice and shift in school culture are important. The knowledge and skills of teacher leadership, including inquiry as stance, need to be developed to

help teacher leaders think critically about their practice. The development of teacher leaders' knowledge and skills is important as it has the power to impact others (teacher-colleagues, peers, and even larger systems), and to impact schools and cultures, and to move instructional leadership work forward.

Action research can be used as a vehicle for ongoing, job-embedded, in-service teacher leadership development. Lieberman (2009) suggests that as researchers, teachers can: (a) become members of professional communities, (b) learn to conduct research on problems of their own practice, and (c) become articulate about the work through publication of their research. While Lieberman refers specifically to teachers as researchers, this notion of teachers as researchers can be extended and applied to *teacher leaders* as researchers, as well, given that the goals and aims of action research serve to develop the knowledge and skills of teachers toward improved *leadership practice* at the same time that they shed light on individual teachers' practice.

The goals of action research in education can include the improvement of one's own instructional practice, the generation of professional knowledge, and/or the achievement of critical, democratic goals (Noffke, 1997). These are attributes of leadership that represent a shift for many teachers, as this work brings with it a new and larger audience, as their practices build toward generating knowledge, which requires sharing the work with others. The systematic and critical reflection processes associated with action research have been found to amplify teachers' voice and lead to a reframing of teachers' work (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Harris, 2003; Judah & Richardson, 2006, Ross et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2011). This reframing involves approaching problems of practice in new and different ways. The amplification of teachers' voices comes through the publication or sharing of their research work with a wider audience,

creating an element of advocacy and a means of telling their leadership stories. The development of teacher voice and agency through action research has been linked to teacher leadership development (Judah & Richardson, 2006; Smeets & Ponte, 2009). The impact of *reflection* through the undertaking of action research and the development of an inquiry stance are key components of teacher leadership development.

The next section outlines the focus of inquiry and research questions for this particular study, as it sees action research as a means to build teacher leadership in the practices, knowledge, skills, and dispositions toward a leadership identity. The following section shows the knowledge gap and the limited understanding that exists regarding teacher leadership development and *how* teachers learn to lead, as well as what that learning entails, and explores action research as a way to bridge this learning gap.

Focus of Inquiry and Research Questions

This study seeks to address the knowledge gap that exists regarding the development of teacher leaders through action research. A lack of deep understanding of teacher leadership development, in part, is due to limited research on how teachers become leaders. For the reasons discussed above, action research appears to offer a particularly promising vehicle for the learning of new teacher leaders on several fronts—the development of facility of using data and identifying evidence of practices, and the use of inquiry as stance. Additionally, action research provides: (a) a natural arena for interacting with colleagues about their teaching (without being seen as preaching to them, or correcting them, but rather collaborating with them in a problem solving situation); and (b) the development of a more secure identity of teacher leaders who can have impact on colleagues practice. As such, teacher leaders' engagement in mentored action

research affords a particularly rich area for scholarly study, one that is not yet sufficiently explored. This project investigates how this activity as a form of professional development can impact teacher leaders' growth, development and work.

The next section highlights the potential impact of action research to build leadership in teachers as they transition to new and different roles and continue to take on and develop new identities. It explores some of the learning needs of teacher leaders, and matches elements of action research onto those often unmet and unfulfilled needs. This section notes the need for specific kinds of professional learning through which teacher leaders are supported in the process of collaborative inquiry, and shows the current gaps in this type of support and learning.

Aspects of Action Research Deserving Further Study

An important aspect of this study is the possibility of building a greater understanding of how teachers become leaders; what skills and dispositions they develop; and how they expand and change their view of self, of their work, and the ways in which they work. Teacher leadership provides novel and unique methods of working and opportunities for learning. It also provides for growth amongst and between teachers. Teacher leaders' learning needs, as they move into positions of leadership, include the necessity to hone their abilities to lead their own learning as well as the learning of their colleagues (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). As discussed and justified so far in this paper, the work of teacher leadership is a concept worthy of exploration. However, Ross et al. (2011) note that "Although some graduate programs target teacher leadership, there is little research about their impact" (p. 1214). A review of existing literature highlights the need for this important work. Included in this call is the need for guidance and support related to understanding *how* teachers become teacher leaders. While some of the literature highlights and names a specific set of skills and knowledge around teacher

leadership (CTSP, 2009; TLEC, 2011), and the need for these skills to be developed, there is little in the literature regarding *how* this work is actually carried out.

Professional development for teacher leaders that is focused on collaborative inquiry can be a means to successfully transition into teacher leadership. This work is supported and guided through specific actions and structures. The development of an *inquiry stance* among teachers can be facilitated by university professors or district specialists acting as a critical 'other' in facilitating reflection (Little, 2003; Putnam & Borko, 2000). Professional development through learning communities, akin to the settings outlined in this proposed study, assumes a collaborative, inquiry-based stance (Sirotnik, 1988). According to Sirotnik, this type of professional development involves creating a context where "…values, beliefs, interests, and ideologies in the educational setting are made explicit; the need for information is generated; and actions are taken, critically reviewed, and retaken" (p. 169). Emerging evidence suggests that these initiatives can lead to effective, long-term teacher development (Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001; Little, 2003), and in principle, that could mean the development of teacher leaders, as well. The type of support reported in the literature is varied, but it is clear that specific kinds of support are critical for allowing teachers the time, place, and intellectual capacity to collaboratively inquire into their practice (Gamoran et al., 2003; Nelson & Slavit, 2008; Nelson, Slavit, Perkins, & Hathorn, 2008). Recent research focused on the learning outcomes of graduate students in university-based degree programs provides some evidence about what can support teacher leadership development in formal program settings (Ross et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2011). These reports point to the impact of *action research* and the development of an *inquiry stance* as keys to teacher leadership development.

As noted previously, the gap in the literature exists in empirical research on: (a) how teacher leaders learn to do their work (both skills and knowledge and dispositions and beliefs) (b) what specific skills and knowledge teacher leaders need in order to do their work, (c) what collaborative and inquiry-based teacher leadership work requires and how engagement in it can contribute to leaders' learning, (d) what teachers learn about leadership and how they can exercise that leadership as they develop as teacher leaders, and (e) *how* teacher leaders come to understand their roles, navigate the work, and improve their skills.

There is a surprising lack of research around teacher leader preparation programs. In part, this may reflect the small number of such programs, but it also is probably due to the lack of scholarly attention to this realm of leadership activity, alluded to earlier. Berg et al. (2013) cite York-Barr & Duke's (1994) work, noting that "education research has not coalesced around the topic of teacher leadership, nascent theories are not tested across group settings, and teacher leader-related policies and practices are generally not documented in ways that can inform others" (p. 2). Based in part on this lack of documented outcomes, the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium (TLEC) developed Teacher Leader Model Standards in 2011; but the extent to which these standards are being used and implemented is not yet clear (Berg et al., 2013). In their research, Nelson et al. (2008) found that "although the literature on teacher collaborative inquiry is emerging, there is a paucity of both empirical and descriptive evidence" (p. 1273) on the design, structure, and impacts of this work. Given how thin the research base is and the nuanced nature of learning, it is not surprising that scholars have yet to construct a satisfactory picture of a teacher leader's learning process.

Given this knowledge gap, intensive investigations of particular approaches to teacher leader development have an important contribution to make. And given the likelihood that

carefully mentored action research experiences may make substantial contributions to teacher leaders' learning; that seems like an appropriate place to start. From this gap in knowledge and the five noted critical areas above outlining the gap in the literature, this study aims to address the research questions outlined below.

Research Questions

This study intends to explore the growth and changes in the teacher leaders themselves that result from their participation in mentored and supported action research. In essence, the proposed study aims to answers this question: *How does participation in action research impact teachers' professional growth and development as leaders?* The aim of this study was to investigate this question further through the following related sub-questions:

1. How, if at all, does teacher leaders' conception of their leadership skills, knowledge, and abilities change through participation in action research?
2. In what ways does engagement in action research shape their professional identities as instructional leaders?
3. How, if at all, does this work impact teacher leaders' leadership abilities, and their instructional skills and practices, and how is this manifested?

Rationale

This qualitative case-study aims to address knowledge gaps on the following fronts: (a) contributing to the knowledge base of how teachers become teacher leaders, (b) considering action research as a form of professional development, and (c) understanding more about what the results of undertaking action research are for teacher leaders. This study offers a greater understanding of how this transition from teacher to leader takes place, within a particular professional development context. This study also sheds light on what teachers need to become leaders and how their work can be supported. This study's findings may provide valuable insight

to scholars and teacher leadership preparation programs in better understanding what happens to teacher leaders as they take on action research. Contributions may be made concerning how, if at all, teacher leadership work is influenced by engagement in action research. This study illuminates the outcomes of action research on teacher leaders as they take on this systematic, self-reflective inquiry and strive to make meaning throughout the process.

Organization of this Document

This dissertation is organized as follows. The first chapter presents an argument for these research problems; the second chapter grounds the research problems and ways of conceptualizing them further in relevant literature; the third chapter describes and justifies the methodology chosen for answering the research questions. The fourth and fifth chapters offer my main findings. In particular, Chapter 4 explores the nuanced case studies and settings and contexts in which the action research took place, as well as the specific challenges that a sampling of the participants took up their through action research. It also outlines the scope of their studied projects. In Chapter 5, the focus shifts to within and across case themes and analysis, highlighting my findings as I attempt to address and answer the study's research questions, as noted in the previous section. Lastly, Chapter 6 discusses the contributions of the proposed study to existing scholarship and current practice.

CHAPTER 2.

Framing Ideas

As described in Chapter 1, much of the research literature asserts that teacher leadership is not without its challenges, although there are also many promising practices highlighted as well. There are gaps in the literature in the area of how teachers become leaders, and how they learn to lead. As previously mentioned, action research holds promise as a potential means to learn to lead through job-embedded professional development using inquiry as a stance to explore research *problems* of practice, which can constitute powerful sources of learning. The notion of problems as a site of learning has been well-established in sociocultural learning theory (Rogoff, 1995) and situated cognition (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Nelson & Slavit, 2008). Such theory provides grounding for a study of teacher leader learning from interactions in their daily practice. It also provides a way to consider what guides and mediates teacher leadership work with teachers. Most literature on teacher leadership ignores teacher leaders' own learning processes. This chapter presents an argument for using concepts from sociocultural learning theory as a helpful lens to analyze teacher leaders' learning.

In what follows, I first define sociocultural learning theories as a frame for teacher leaders' professional learning. Then, I offer theoretical grounding for shifts in identity as teacher leaders take on these new roles, drawing from sociocultural theory. I also highlight how teacher leaders learn to lead, again from a sociocultural perspective that puts them at the center of this learning and leading, as they conduct this work through knowing, being, doing, and seeing themselves through the process of their leadership actions. Finally, I present a conceptual framework that draws on specific concepts from sociocultural learning theory to help illuminate the process of teacher leader learning and development through investigation of problems of

practice through action research. The framework shows that this learning and development occur through guided participation in mentored action research (Rogoff, 1995). The framework offers a way to examine the contexts and larger structures that shape how teacher leaders learn to navigate their work and enact their roles and leadership.

To understand teacher leadership development in the context of the action research process, this proposed study draws on sociocultural theories of learning. These theories support the premise that participation in action research can mediate teacher leader learning because of its focus on professional practice. In this section I outline my theoretical stance, describing sociocultural perspectives on identity development and on professional learning. These theoretical ideas relate to the themes and ideas in the literature, and to the research questions guiding the work presented in this proposal.

Sociocultural Approaches to Professional Learning

Teacher leadership is a situated practice; I define practice both practically in the sense of what coaches do when they work with teachers (Gallucci et al., 2010), and theoretically as a social practice or as "a process through which we experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful" (Wenger, 1999). This latter definition of practice implies that teacher leadership derives its meaning not only from individuals doing certain things, but also through negotiations of meaning through interactions among teacher leaders and their colleagues in a particular social and historical context. Teacher leadership is "situated" (Wenger, 1999) in the sense that it occurs in the context of teachers' and schools' problems of practice as they are encountered (Taylor, 2008), as well as school or district reform goals (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008).

Professional development that calls upon teachers to become leaders through the undertaking of action research is sociocultural in nature, incorporating collaborative inquiry. To make this work successful is to build capacity in schools to enable transformation (Lieberman & Miller, 2000). Capacity building in this case occurs through teacher leadership, as they develop skills and knowledge to allow them enact change. This learning occurs as teacher leaders engage themselves and others in classroom based inquiry (Shulman, 2004; Valli et al., 2006). In the case of this study, this work happens through action research. Drawing upon a socioculturalist perspective, learning occurs as an individual construction of meaning and also through the social actions of talk and shared activity (Vygotsky & Kozulin, 1986; Wertsch, 1985). These theories assume that learning is situated in everyday social contexts. Learning involves changes in participation in activity settings or communities, rather than the individual acquisition of abstract concepts separate from interaction and experience (Rogoff, 1995; Wenger, 1999). This provides a way to consider engagement in action research as a set of tools and interactions (social practices) that can mediate teacher leadership development, as action research involves active participation. Engagement in action research requires these teacher leaders to actively construct meaning through their work. In their communities of practice, they share and analyze teaching and learning practices through talk and shared activity. Their negotiation and construction of meaning occur on the job as they inquire into practice with others.

Nelson and Slavit (2008) have synthesized much of this work as it relates to situated cognition. Situated cognition is a theory that posits that knowing is inseparable from doing by arguing that all knowledge is situated in activity bound to social, cultural and physical contexts. Cognition cannot be separated from the context. Instead knowing exists *in situ*, inseparable from context, activity, people, culture, and language. Situated cognition theory moves toward

perspectives of learning as emergent and social (Greeno, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Salomon, 1996). Collins (1988) defines situated learning as the notion of learning knowledge and skills in contexts that reflect the way they will be used in real life. As in the case of participation in action research, this form of job-embedded professional development is in situ, as it takes place in context and within the setting of the school, district, and university as communities of practice. Situated cognition theory encourages educators to immerse learners in an environment that approximates as closely as possible context in which their new ideas and behaviors will be applied (Schell & Black, 1997). Action research immerses teacher leaders as learners in authentic environments where their new ideas and behaviors are being developed, tested, and applied as they are learning, taking on, and carrying out leadership roles. This is learning in action, as they learn on the job, in the settings where they lead and enact these roles as teacher leaders.

Regarded as leaders in the situated cognition movement, Lave and Wenger (1991), describe learning as an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world (p. 35). Their definition bears analysis: generative implies that learning is an act of creation or co-creation; social suggests that at least a portion of learning time occurs in partnership with others; and lived-in world connotes real-world practices and settings that make learning more relevant, useful, and transferable. These are all elements of the structures of mentored action research, as used in this study, as learning is co-created in partnership with others, merging their mentored cohort-based support with their enactment of their roles, making this learning dynamic, real world, and transferable across academic and practical settings. Dynamic communities of practice are seen as a critical element of situated cognition theory's sociological view of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Thus, learning not only involves teacher and student but also assorted

others. The assorted others are those who are in the communities of practice through mentored action research, with teachers in schools and districts, and as peer colleagues and with job-alike folks, taking on the action research process together. These comprise the dynamic communities of practice in which the learning takes place through action research.

Nelson and Slavit (2008) found that centering professional development around essential elements of classroom practice contributes to creating questions about practice that become the focus of further inquiry (Cohen & Ball, 1999; Lampert & Ball, 1998; Supovitz & Turner, 2000; Thompson & Zeuli, 1999). In this case, the problems of practice are the focal point for further inquiry and a basis for the action research work. Teacher leaders, like teachers, can "intervene in the isolation of practice" (Ball & Cohen, 1999, p. 21) through inquiry. Action research and the adoption of inquiry as stance provides an entry point for this intervention into practice. These processes occur in the context of the work—not as a separate activity—and they are embedded in a collective, as is the case with the cohort based settings for this proposed research study. Collaborative inquiry can provide a decision-making and problem-solving stance, driving teacher leaders toward goals that support long-term change (Giles & Hargreaves, 2006). *This is the work of teacher leadership*; as they intervene in and investigate problems of practice, collaboration occurs within their relationships with teachers, administration, and those that occupy similar roles and take up similar tasks—other teacher leaders.

Teacher leaders face the challenges of changing their *role* and *identity*. This is a complex process that requires time for reflection, discourse, questioning, practice, and feedback, rather than a one-time or short-term encounter with others' ideas (Fullan, 1993, 1999; Loucks-Horsley et al., 2003). Coursework should ideally be job-embedded (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Lave & Wenger, 1991; York-Barr & Duke, 2004), meaning that learning is situated within

an authentic context and constructed through social interaction and collaboration (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In the case of this study, the work is job-embedded, as teacher leaders work through and learn through problems of practice. The job-embedded nature of the work enhances teachers' knowledge of practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Increased and improved knowledge of practice sits in the area of teacher leadership; it is knowledge that teacher leaders must acquire in order to be effective leaders. The social construction of meaning that occurs through the nature of this inquiry-based, reflective professional development must be done in collaboration with others (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Desimone, 2009; Feeney, 2009; Tom, 1999; Zeichner & Liston, 1996), which is another facet of the sociocultural roots of this work. This collaboration within a community of practice helps teacher leaders develop a repertoire of practical tools, conceptual learning, and ways of thinking about problems that enable them to move beyond simply knowing about practice to actual implementation (Wenger, 1999). The knowledge, skills, and practices rooted in a sociocultural way of thinking about learning are essential to teacher leaders' success. The understanding that this type of learning takes place through communities of practice is a concept and process that needs to be made transparent to teacher leaders. These processes of learning together in a community of practice and the outcomes of these structures for learning need to be taught to teacher leaders.

Vygotskian ideas of development describe learning and change as the internalization and transformation of cultural tools that occur as individuals participate in social practice (Herrenkohl & Wertsch, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978). These scholars provide a view of action research as a set of interactions (social practices) that can mediate teacher leadership development in a supported learning environment. This is important because these ideas about social practice tie into learning as a process of collaborative inquiry. Teacher leaders' identity

development is tied to their learning process. Teacher leaders can develop their identity in many ways, such as through engagement with peers and participation in professional development; both of these learning opportunities are a critical part of this mentored action research work that these teacher leaders took on. Through action research, teacher leaders collaboratively inquire into their own practices as they adopt an inquiry stance. Furthermore, teacher leaders develop their identities on the job, through the social practices that make up the interactions throughout their work day, where they have various opportunities to excercise leadership while working collaboratively with others.

More recent literature focused on the instructional leadership of teacher leaders (Lieberman & Friedrich, 2010; Lieberman & Miller, 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) and instructional coaches (Gallucci et al., 2010; Knight, 2007; Taylor, 2008) explores how teachers develop a "leadership identity", learn to do this work, and come to survive in their often fragile or ambiguous position within the school (Portin et al., 2013). However, research on the development of a leadership identity for teachers as they transition into new roles is still somewhat limited in scope. From the literature, there are emergent ideas regarding the additive identity development that grows alongside a teacher identity. Teacher leaders do not lose or leave behind their identities as teachers; their teacher identity is still a critical part of their being. Often, the teacher identity no longer proves useful in the new role(s) that they take on as teacher leaders, hence the development of a new additive teacher leader identity. This is a necessary development to navigate the new challenges of teacher leadership. Teacher leaders take on leadership as part of their identity as well. They come to see themselves as leaders, through their experiences as teacher leaders, in taking on this new work and guiding and leading others. Their teacher identity is still a part of who they are, but the newly emergent leadership identity helps

inform and guide their ways of working in these new roles. The ways in which this growth and development occur are not fully explored, and are difficult to get at, as identity is a nebulous construct.

Action research is one process through which teacher leaders can develop their identity through practice and learning. One of the main areas of capacity building for teacher leadership suggested by previous research is the need to improve teachers' self-confidence to act as leaders in their schools (Clemson-Ingram & Fessler, 1997; Gehrke, 1991). Through collaborating with teachers within and across schools, engaging in trying new teaching approaches, disseminating their findings to colleagues and engaging in action research**,** the potential for teacher leadership is significantly enhanced (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Such activities help to develop teachers' confidence and reflection on their practice (Harris & Muijs, 2005). The teacher leaders described in this study participated in mentored action research processes that provided organizational support for reflecting on their own learning and development.

Development of Professional Identities

This study intendsed to explore shifts and changes in identity, as teachers developed as leaders. Teacher leaders are continuously forming a new professional identity as they take on new and different roles and responsibilities. Becoming a teacher leader necessitates establishing an additional professional identity that accompanies but does not replace the identity of "classroom teacher," a process that is not particularly overt and is often hidden from peers and administrators. Teacher leaders are usually experienced teachers; they were often selected to become teacher leaders because of their successes in the classroom and their vast skills and knowledge about teaching. However, when these experienced teachers become teacher leaders,

they become novices again—an experience that can be uncomfortable and often confusing to navigate (Chval et al., 2010). Structured professional development provides a means for this navigation; a star chart to read and follow along with others (the crew) in order to find their way from novice to expert. One form of this structured professional development as a map for navigating growth can possibly be seen in action research.

Identity as a theoretical concept is closely associated with the sociocultural view of learning. That is, one's identity is shaped by his or her lived and negotiated experience within a particular culture. Wenger (1999) explains that "identity is a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities" (p. 5). By engaging in a culture (in the case of this study, the mentored action research culture, and school and district cultures), individuals negotiate their roles within the culture, which in turn impacts how an individual views himself or herself (Chval et al., 2010). In this study, teacher leadership work and action research impact the participants' identities.

The social negotiation of making meaning is inherent in practice and therefore, practice should be understood as a process of learning (Wenger, 1999). Learning is social, and occurs in communities of practice, and in specific settings structured for this learning and meaning-making. As teacher leaders navigate their new roles, they are learning through the context of the work. Action research provides a context where teacher leaders' learning is self-directed. Wenger (1999) links identity development with learning. Identity is not fixed but instead is always being negotiated through social and collaborative processes. A complex set of relations and mutual constitution between individuals and groups shape one's identity (Wenger, 1999). In the socioculturalist view, identity is constantly negotiated in social context.

The original framing of the theoretical view of identity is attributed to Goffman's (1959) work, which metaphorically related identity to the role that actors assume on the stage during a performance. Goffman posited that individuals present different identities, in the form of masks, in different settings as they perform for others in an attempt to shape how others view them. In return, the individual receives feedback on this performance that further shapes the identities that the individual presents to others. The portrayal of one's identity occurs naturally as individuals act out various identities in different contexts (Ivanič, 1994). The performance metaphor suggests that individuals possess a complex set of identities that is socially negotiated through interactions with others, rather than a single identity.

Of particular concern in this study is the participating teachers' movement towards an identity as *leader* and all that this implies, in the egalitarian context of the school. As teachers take on these roles, they may experience some mistrust from their peers, as they question whose *side* teacher leaders are on. Shifts to new roles can be challenging, as other teachers in the building may feel threatened by the presence of someone who has been elevated to a new position, and they often fear the power or hierarchical positioning that teacher leadership can imply. In reality, teacher leaders are teachers' peers, and in becoming a teacher leader, they become a novice all over again. The work of teacher leadership can be challenging for even the most gifted teacher, as this work requires a new and different set of knowledge and skills to work with and alongside adults for the improvement of student learning. The placement of a teacher in a leadership role conveys a sense of expertise, which their teacher peers and even they themselves may not feel altogether comfortable with.

Teacher leaders face challenges as they transition into new positions. Most teachers consider themselves leaders within their own classrooms, as every teacher is, in effect, a

benevolent dictator, ruling his/her own domain in the form of a classroom. However, while teachers are comfortable leading groups of children, they are not automatically comfortable leading groups of adults. Researchers agree that teacher leaders face numerous tensions as they shift away from primarily teaching student to primarily teaching adults (Chval et al., 2010). These tensions are well documented, but little attention has been paid to the processes for navigating them (Finkelstein, 2011) or how teacher leaders can learn to navigate them, potentially through formal professional development (such as the action research in this study). There is an inherent expertise assumed in teacher leaders, yet the skills and knowledge comprised in these roles are not automatic. Research suggests that teacher leaders rely on establishing instructionally-focused, trusting relationships with their peers to create legitimacy. One source of legitimacy is successful teaching experience (Marsh, McCombs, & Martorell, 2012) and teachers' perceptions of their instructional knowledge (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008). Taking on a leadership identity presents its own challenges, even when there are strong sources of legitimacy that they carry with them from their teaching work.

Teacher leaders often face the task of establishing and maintaining the legitimacy of their work as teacher leaders; they often have to justify their position and its purpose and its role in instructional reform practice, as well as having to prove themselves and their value or worth as teacher leaders. In some school contexts, teachers view themselves as independent practitioners (Lortie, 1975) without need of assistance. Teacher leadership may seem to imply hierarchy, power over others, and a sense of expertise. These ideas are in conflict with the camaraderie and norms of collaboration between and amongst teachers in schools. Another challenge is the new ground, which is often viewed as a middle ground, that teacher leaders now occupy as they act as brokers between traditional authority figures in school systems, including the district office,

principals, and teachers (Swinnerton, 2007). Researchers have noted that this middle ground can be hotly contested and teacher leaders may feel torn between internal and external demands on the school (Little, 2003). These middle spaces spark considerable role confusion (Taylor, 2008), and successful teacher leaders must learn to "bridge" this space and communicate messages from and to teachers and administrators (Portin et al., 2009). Yet how or even whether they learn to do this is unclear.

Learning to Lead

A third set of ideas are more specifically related to leadership per se, no matter who is exercising it (teacher, administrator, policymaker), and what it may imply for structuring of leadership development. The literature asserts or implies that the problems of teacher leadership differ from the problems of teaching, suggesting that teacher leaders have much to learn in order to navigate their new roles. Insights from other research on learning to lead in educational contexts suggests that problems of practice can become sources of powerful learning and development (Donaldson, 2008). Donaldson (2008) defines such problems as ones that are "important to success and won't go away" (p. 44), and that "promise significant personal growth" (p. 44). Over time, teacher leaders develop ways of thinking about teacher development, ways of assessing teacher practice, and appropriate ways to support teacher growth. Gibson (2005) concluded that "learning how to coach effectively is likely to be at least as challenging and complex an endeavor as learning to teach is…" (p. 72). In the absence of support and professional growth and learning, teacher leaders struggle to take on these new roles, practices, and identities.

For the purposes of discussing leadership learning in this study, I draw upon Donaldson's (2008) work. According to Donaldson, there are three domains of leadership activity and learning: cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Donaldson asserts that leadership learning includes not only cognitive and interpersonal dimensions, but also the "intrapersonal domain." In this domain, teacher leaders benefit from learning more about themselves as learners (Taylor, 2011). Donaldson defines this domain as concerned with leaders' self-identification as leaders and knowledge of their strengths and needs, motivations, past experiences, and impact on others. Through time and practice, teacher leaders are shaped and molded by what they do, think, and feel as leaders. This perspective on learning to lead is bound closely to identity, as it is tied to teacher leaders' learning and practice. This notion of learning over time and through the practices of engagement in leadership activity is sociocultural in nature, as teacher leaders learn through knowing, being, and doing. Such is the case for the purposes of this study, as well. According to Donaldson (2008), doing leadership work is an important condition for learning to perform as an effective leader; in essence, we learn through doing. Through the process of learning to lead, we learn "how to behave and think so that colleagues' practice and student learning grow" (p. 27). The intrapersonal domain includes lessons on learning to lead.

A larger set of questions regarding what guides how teacher leaders learn to navigate these problems in their daily work is at the heart of this study. Like Gallucci et al. (2010), I assume that teacher leaders are themselves learners, and that we know relatively little about how they learn from their daily work or from professional development. There is little empirical evidence that examines how teacher leaders learn to navigate obstacles in their work (Gallucci et al., 2010; Michelson, 2013). We know that the work of supporting adult professional learning differs from the work of teaching students (Gibson, 2005) and many teacher leaders receive no

training at all when placed in their roles (Murphy, 2005; Neufield & Roper, 2003). Some literature suggests that problems of practice, in seeking, finding, and attempting to address problems of practice can constitute powerful opportunities for learning (Michelson, 2013). One way that this can happen is in a mentored and supported model where facilitated, small group conversation about these problems over time provide these opportunities for learning situated in practice (Copland, 2002; Donaldson, 2008; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1992; Taylor, 2011). These insights suggest that teacher leaders may learn a great deal through problem-solving activities and work, especially if and when they receive support in navigating these problems of practice.

As some districts and universities are starting to design systematic approaches to supporting leadership development, research suggests that leaders may benefit from on-going, differentiated, responsive, engaging professional learning opportunities that consistently model best practices in leadership and instruction (Knapp et al., 2010). While these models may shed some light into systematic support on a broad level, there is a dearth of research examining how teacher leaders approach and engage with problems of practice in their specific contexts and school or district settings. We do not know if and how teacher leaders take up ideas from systematic support or professional development in their work, or how these limited learning opportunities impact their practices (Michelson, 2013). In what follows, I work to bring together the ideas in the gaps in literature on teacher leader learning under the umbrella of a conceptual framework that uses mentored action research to drive the development of practices.

A Conceptual Framework to Guide the Research

In what follows, I propose a framework for understanding how teachers become teacher leaders through action research. This framework depicts how teacher leaders' contexts, prior

experiences, and mentored action research work influence their leadership learning and practices. Figure 1 visually depicts that framework.

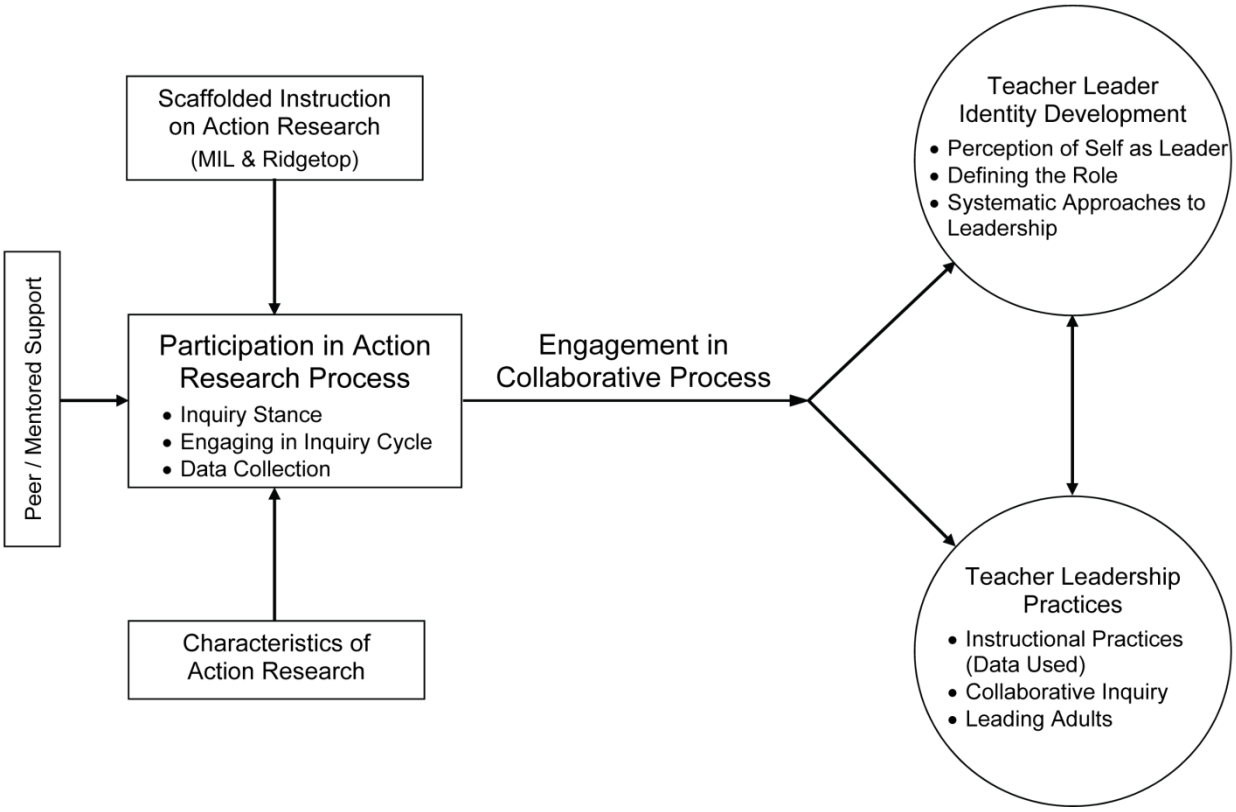


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Teacher Leadership Development Through Action Research

Note. Context: District, School, Role.

This conceptual framework for teacher leaders conducting action research shows how scaffolded instruction on action research and characteristics of action research are driving forces that influence participants learning about and participating in action research. The participants in this study received ongoing support in their coursework from both their colleagues and from their advisor(s) in these settings. The characteristics of action research refer to the methods, research based learning, and dispositions to inquire as put forth by university faculty in both settings. These teacher leaders learned about action research while simultaneously participating in action research. They developed an inquiry stance as they learned about the inquiry cycle.

They identified a problem of practice and developed research questions to inquire into the problem and worked to come up with interventions. This is important as their learning caused shifts in their identities, their relationships, and teacher leadership practices as a result of their learning about and participation in action research.

The conceptual framework highlights the characteristics of action research in these two settings. An important characteristic of action research in both of these settings is the scaffolded instruction that participants received that also included mentored support. This model also provides mentored support of their peers, as action research, in this case, is completed in a cohort model where participants interact with one another around their new learning and their problems of practice and ongoing research as they work through the process. Additionally, there is a scholarly aspect to the action research work, requiring research and knowledge of learning, theories, and use of relevant literature to frame the problems of practice that participants selected for their projects. Contextual background, in terms of individual participant's district, school and role are part of the background of the conceptual framework, and they represent what teacher leaders bring with them to this work. This conceptual framework also highlights possible outcomes of action research, which may occur through the engagement in collaborative inquiry, noting possible shifts in identity and shifts in practices both in terms of leadership practices and role development as teacher leaders develop new skills (data collection, creation and use of tools). This framework also loosely covers relationships in terms of engagement in collaborative inquiry as a means to enact the work of teacher leadership.

CHAPTER 3.

Study Design and Methods

This study is part of a larger qualitative research investigation, undertaken by a team (myself included) linked to two programs: (a) the Ridgetop (pseudonym) School District's Action Research cohort based seminar program and (b) the Masters in Instructional Leadership (MIL) program at the UW College of Education; both programs feature the same instructional support, through the same instructor, with the same curriculum and teaching, readings, and processes for action research, including cohort-support-based mentored action research. The focus of this larger qualitative research investigation was the question of how action research impacts teacher leaders. This dissertation study took full advantage of data collected previously during the 2012-2013 school year from a group of teacher leaders who had participated in MIL and/or related district-based training, and then extended what could be learned from these cases by adding new follow-up data collection in 2014. The multiple rounds of interviews and observations conducted at the University of Washington and in the Eiderdown, Lakehills, and Ridgetop (pseudonyms) School Districts enabled me to develop a detailed longitudinal picture of these emergent teacher leaders' learning through their mentored experiences with action research. This data provided a broader context for understanding the work of teacher leaders while undertaking action research, as observed in both their school and district sites and also in their action research seminars.

In this chapter I describe and justify the resulting design, incorporating both initial and follow-up rounds of data collection, along with the integrative analyses that sought to uncover how these teacher leaders learn, grow, and develop as they navigate both action research and their teacher leadership roles simultaneously while engaging with their peers.

The Research Tradition

A qualitative approach to research was especially appropriate for this dissertation study, as addressing the research questions in this study would require time spent observing and collecting "naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). This is a distinguishing characteristic of research in many qualitative traditions, drawing on time spent in the field. Specifically, the research questions called for qualitative inquiry into individual reflections, day-to-day teacher leadership work, and the participants' interpretation(s) of these events, through a design that "aim(s) to produce a firsthand understanding" (Yin, 2006, p. 113) of teacher leaders in their "natural settings," in both schools/districts and mentored action research seminars. Qualitative research is a good fit for my research questions, as "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3).

My research design featured multiple case studies. A set of six descriptive case studies—three teacher leaders from the MIL program, and three participating in the parallel training sequence at Ridgetop school district—provided examples of different, though complementary, conceptions of teacher leadership development. In each, the design enabled me to probe the impacts of action research on teacher leaders who engaged in a yearlong, mentored action research process. Case studies have the potential of contributing to further inquiry, and can shed light on emerging theoretical perspectives (Merriam, 2009). A case study approach offered many affordances, as individuals, schools, and systems are dynamic, comprised of differing characteristics that are ever-changing and constantly in flux. As such, a qualitative case study approach was an appropriate method for capturing these varied aspects. By applying a social-cultural theoretical framework, this case study sheds light on teacher leaders' perceptions

and actions stemming from their interactions through action research within their cohorts and mentor-supported settings in ways that would not otherwise be captured as easily in a quantitative study (Stake, 2005). Through this work, I made "attempts to link processes of enactment to outcomes of interest" (Sandoval, 2013, pp. 3-4): the research design sought to shed light on the impacts of action research on the learning and practice of these teacher leaders, as they carried out their work in complex settings. The qualitative data that this kind of study design produces provides ways to understand how teacher leaders determine how to carry out their roles. The data provides insight into how they experience knowing, doing, and being as teacher leaders undertaking action research.

Because teacher leadership and action research are both broad, nebulous concepts that are difficult to pin down and/or define, a qualitative strategy is especially appropriate for uncovering the subtle nuances in the leaders' work and their response to it, a process that quantitative research methods would be less able to manage (Stake, 2005). In particular, I examined data that another peer (a University of Washington College of Education doctoral student and teacher leader in a local neighboring district) and I collected on six teacher leaders while they were in process of conducting action research. This data forms in-depth case studies in the "basic" interpretive tradition of qualitative inquiry (Merriam, 2009). The data collection and design feature multiple data sources to offer different avenues for understanding teacher leaders' activity and learning. These multiple data sources also offer ways to increase the credibility of the data and findings through triangulation among multiple sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2003). Multiple sources refer to different settings and interactions with a variety of teachers, peers, colleagues, and university faculty as these teacher leaders engaged others in their action research work.

Sample Selection

In this section, I describe how the teacher leader participants were selected, and provide the background information of the study's context and timing.

I selected my sample drawing from a pool of participants working on action research projects in 2012-2013 in two settings in which this activity was a prominent part of the teacher leaders' work. My approach to choosing participants was rooted in purposeful sampling, or "selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). My primary informants and cases at the beginning of the study were all students in the Master's in Leadership (MIL) program at the University of Washington and practicing teacher leaders in the Ridgetop School District, all of whom were participating in action research. I selected these teacher leaders based on their developing leadership skills and their willingness to participate. These site selections offered unique perspectives and influences on the phenomena of interest. Equally important, this dissertation research was a continuation of the previous study conducted in the same settings. Through my work as a teacher leader myself, and my work as a scholar in the same university setting (UW), I had insights and familiarity with the setting and the MIL program that an outside person may not have access to. I had access to these populations through my work at UW with the MIL program and also with the Ridgetop School District, where UW staff were facilitating a cohort group engaged in action research.

Settings

I located the study in settings that would provide an optimal vantage point on the effects of action research immersion on emerging teacher leaders. The two settings in which the study's participants were located offered similar participants, similar expectations for engaging in action research, and similar support systems. The two different learning sites highlighted perspectives

and influences related to the research problem. Both the MIL program and Ridgetop required that participants to complete an extended mentored action research project. An important component in both programs was the building of teachers' effectiveness through reflective practices (Gomez, Allen, & Clinton, 2004) and data-driven inquiry. Through the MIL program, candidates earned their Master's Degree. MIL candidates completed an action research project with guidance from university faculty. The university faculty provided extensive support by helping these teachers develop their conception of action research, formulate research problems and questions, and complete their action research. Teacher leaders in Ridgetop received similar support and guidance in completing their action research projects. Both programs required students to showcase their work by presenting final projects to an authentic audience.

Participants

In this dissertation study I analyzed a "bounded system" (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006; Merriam, 2009), consisting of a group of teacher leaders, involved in cohort groups (either MIL or Ridgetop), and their experiences engaging in action research. The strategy I used to identify participants within these settings emphasized "typical" case sampling (Patton as cited in Merriam, 2009), "because it reflects the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest" (Merriam, 2009, p. 78). In this sense, the teacher leaders I studied were not dissimilar from many teachers who might aspire to doing instructional leadership or coaching work.

Six participants were selected from a larger pool of teacher leaders involved in action research projects during the 2012-2013 school year in the two settings (Ridgetop and MIL). An invitation was extended to all teacher leaders in the pool, and six chose to be involved. They

were also selected to reflect an array of teacher and leadership expertise, project topics, and school contexts, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Six Focal Cases

Case	Position	Program (MIL or ELL)	Years Experience (as Teacher/ Teacher Leader)
Brenda	Central-office based Elementary ELL Specialist serving 9 schools	Ridgetop	5/2
Marcie	Classroom teacher, PLC leader, member of school leadership team	MIL program (local rural school district)	19/7
Callie	School-based ELL facilitator (Elementary)	Ridgetop School District	5/1
Rose	District-based ELL facilitator (Elementary)	Ridgetop School District	19/8
Ellen	School-based Instructional Technology Curriculum Leader (Elementary)	MIL Program (local suburban school district)	11/3
Karen	School-based teacher leader (High School Science)	MIL Program (local suburban school district)	22/17

Note. MIL = Masters in Instructional Leadership; ELL = English language learners.

Four of the teacher leaders worked primarily in a school setting (two elementary and two high school) and the other two were district-based facilitators who each split their time between nine elementary schools. Three were relatively novice teacher leaders and three had extensive experience in leadership roles. Karen, for example, was a student in the MIL program but had served in various teacher leadership roles in her high school and the local teachers' association for 17 years. Nonetheless, all were new to action research.

The teacher leaders' action research projects are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Participants' Action Research Projects:
Title of Paper, Research Questions, and Summary of Findings

Case	Action Research Project
Callie	Title of Action Research Paper: *Exploring Student Language Development: A Collaborative Inquiry Process Between an ELL Facilitator and a Classroom Teacher* Guiding Premise: The research base around oral language development shows that oral language is the foundation for literacy. Research Question: • What happens when an ELL facilitator and a classroom teacher collaborate to investigate student language development and instructional strategies? Findings: Students experienced growth in English language development through this inquiry cycle. The classroom teacher and ELL facilitator also experienced growth in terms of professional development and increased motivation regarding collaborative partnerships.
Brenda	Title of Action Research Paper: *Let's Get Kids Talking: One Dual Language Teacher's Quest to Increase Student Talk in Spanish* Research Questions: • How can we increase the use of oral academic Spanish in the classroom by all students? • How does an inquiry/coaching cycle impact the professional development of the coach and classroom teacher? Findings: Brenda grew in her coaching skills and shifted her practice as she changed her stance from "one who knows" to that of an inquiry stance, guiding the teacher through reflection to her own solutions and understandings. They both grew in knowledge and practice through collaboration, and the students increased their use of academic Spanish through shifts in teaching practice, as guided by Brenda. This job-embedded professional development brought about these changes in practice, understanding, and outcomes.
Ellen	Title of Action Research Paper: *Learning How to Talk: The Impact of Building Communication Skills on Professional Relationships* Research Questions: • How do relationships in schools manifest in the way teachers communicate? How can explicitly building communication skills impact professional relationships and the way instructional leaders work together? Findings: Relationships ran along a spectrum from adversarial all the way to collegial, but relationships are not static. Not only can they develop over time, they are fluid and can move in either direction along the spectrum based on countless variables such as the context in which people are working. Ellen found behavioral indicators that suggest which type of relationship members engaged in anywhere between parallel play, congenial, and collegial. She found three indicators of where on the relationship spectrum our interactions functioned: (a) response to conflict, (b) resisting communication, and (c) assimilation of communication skills.

Case	Action Research Project
Marcie	Title of Action Research Paper: *Leading Literacy: Implementing Literacy Standards in the Science Classroom* Research Questions: • What are the current practices within our building in the content area of science that support literacy standards? • Will collaborative lesson planning and peer observations encourage teachers to implement literacy standards as described by the CCSS and utilize literacy strategies in their instruction? • What lasting impact will these professional development opportunities have on a teacher's practice? Findings: The science teachers are actively seeking resources and help from the English department in ways they can support students. It is important to note that they have requested help from colleagues who are knowledgeable about literacy strategies and standards.
Karen	Title of Action Research Paper: *Collaborating with Outside Experts: Teacher Leadership in Problem-based Learning Curriculum Design* Research Questions: • In what ways does a focused improvement effort by teacher leaders affect PBL team planning? • How does this intervention support PBL team's use of expertise, especially outside expertise, if at all? • In what ways does this intervention impact the curriculum design process? Findings: Common themes emerged from the data: (1) relationships are important for finding outside experts to work with design teams or classrooms; (2) teachers expanding their definition of expertise is important for implementation of this element; (3) techniques and training for the use of experts is important to implementation of the expertise key element. Theme one and two were found in all five data sources. Theme three was a repeated idea in the survey and interviews.
Rose	Title of Action Research Paper: *Bringing ELL and Literacy Practices Together: Collaborating to Improve Instruction* Research Questions: • What happens when an ELL and literacy specialist collaborate to plan and provide literacy support at two schools? • What does the literacy specialist learn? What does the ELL specialist learn? • How does the collaboration impact teacher learning? Findings: This collaboration between ELL and Literacy specialists resulted in an improved quality of professional development. The evidence of improved PD quality is seen in the benefits of the collaboration to students, school staff, and the specialists themselves. While the results of this study as well as other research on teacher collaboration support the notion that professional collaboration is beneficial for a variety of reasons, there are organizational conditions within this and other school districts that both inhibit and support collaboration. All stakeholders in this study desired and saw the benefit to the collaboration from the principals, to the participating classroom teachers, to the specialists themselves. At the district level there are few systems or structures in place to encourage collaboration between the specialists. While the collaboration certainly does take place on an ad-hoc basis, there are not consistent formal structures in place to provide for systematic collaboration. The current structure of specialist positions may inhibit collaboration between the ELL and literacy departments.

Note. ELL = English language learners.

Timing

In terms of the timeframe, I interviewed these teacher leaders at critical points in their work when they were in the process of conducting their action research during the December to March period of 2012-2013. These teacher leaders conducted their action research concurrently, on roughly the same school year timeline, in both the Ridgetop and MIL programs. Both of the action research study programs (Ridgetop and MIL) required the participants to complete their work by early spring. Data was collected while they were actively involved in their action research work.

The follow-up data collection took place 1 year later, well after their projects were fully concluded, and at a point in their ongoing work as teacher leaders that they could gain perspective on what they experience had enabled them to learn and do.

Data Collection Strategies and Procedures

My design featured two rounds of data collection: (a) from December 2012 through May 2013, while the participants conducted their action research projects; and (b) from October through December of 2014, after participants had completed their action research projects and continued their work in schools. The combined qualitative data set from these two rounds included: repeated interviews; observations of the action research seminars and teacher leaders' work in school/district contexts; and artifacts such as the participants' action research reports.

In order to increase the credibility of findings, I triangulated data from these multiple sources (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2003, Yin, 2006), thereby building trustworthiness of my analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data collection events are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Data Collection Events for Each Participant

Data Collection Event	Details	Purpose	Data Collection	Research Question Addressed
Case study interview (December, 2012)	1 hour semi-structured interview using protocol and probes	1. To gain insight into teacher leadership, identity, and action research 2. To build background on roles, professional development opportunities, and support systems for teacher leadership and action research work	Audio recorded and transcribed, artifact collection	1, 3
Observation of teacher leadership work (December-March, 2012-2013)	2-4 observation sessions, up to two hours in length, of teacher leaders' work in classrooms and/or meetings with other teachers	1. To gain insight into actions of teacher leadership, identity, and action research 2. To understand role & work in school and district	Audio recorded and transcribed, artifact collection	2, 3
Observation of action research seminars (December-March, 2012-2013)	Three 2- to 3-hour observations of teacher leaders' action research support classes	1. To gain insight into emerging ideas on action research, support systems for teacher leadership and action research work, and professional development opportunities	Audio recorded and transcribed, artifact collection	1
Mini interview for mid-project check-in (March-April, 2013)	20-30 min semi-structured interview using protocol and probes	1. To build an understanding around changing conceptions of research questions and areas of inquiry for action research 2. To see any growing or changing conceptions and/or teacher leadership practices	Audio recorded and transcribed, artifact collection	1, 3
Final presentation of action research (April-May, 2013)	2- to 3-hour presentation of action research at district and/or university level (where action research is presented in the context of their support seminar)	1. To see conceptions of teacher leadership, identity, and action research 2. To gauge change or growth in ideas about teacher leadership, identity, and action research	Audio recorded and transcribed, artifact collection	1,2,3

Data Collection Event	Details	Purpose	Data Collection	Research Question Addressed
Case study interview (April-May, 2013)	1 hour semi-structured interview using protocol and probes	1. To gain insight into changes in teacher leadership (ways of knowing, being, and doing around the work), identity (shifts or changes in identity and/or view of self as leader), and action research (inquiry as stance on practice) 2. To gain understanding on how work and roles have evolved and changed	Audio recorded and transcribed, artifact collection	1,3
Follow-up interview (October-December, 2014)	1 hour semi-structured interview using protocol and probes	1. To gain insight into any shifts of changes in teacher leadership, identity, and action research 2. To understanding changing conceptions of teacher leadership work	Audio recorded and transcribed, artifact collection	1,3
Observation of teacher leadership events (October-December, 2014)	2-4 observation sessions, up to two hours in length, of teacher leaders' work in classrooms and/or meetings with other teachers	1. To gain insight into shifting or changing actions of teacher leadership, identity, and action research 2. To further understand role & work in school and district	Audio recorded and transcribed, artifact collection	2,3

Interviews

Interviews were designed to gather descriptive data on teacher leaders' conception of their roles, work, and action research, and how they viewed themselves and their experiences (Patton, 2003). I drew on two previously completed rounds of semi-structured interviewing (1 hour each) with the identified teacher leaders using interview protocols, which a colleague and I carried out during the 2012-2013 school year. The interview protocols featured questions developed to align with the research questions and problem. Through using semi-structured interview protocols, my design allowed me to seek out new lines of inquiry and to further elaborate on existing lines of inquiry (Yin, 2006). I was able to ask follow-up questions and

probe for deeper thinking. I framed my interviews within the situated perspective, inquiring into teacher leaders' perspectives and thoughts on how their knowledge, skills, and practices evolved through their experiences, and how they constructex meaning (if at all) from these events. I also conducted an additional round of semi-structured post-action-research interviews in the fall of 2014. I did this in order to increase the validity of my case studies and to explore these teacher leaders' work at another point in time—a time when they could appreciate the longer term effects of their action research experience, and see how to may have translated into their subsequent work and thinking about themselves as teacher leaders (Guba, 1981; Merriam, 2009).

Semi-structured interview protocols (see Appendix A) were appropriate, as they provided the flexibility to respond to emerging ideas (Merriam, 2009). These interviews for the first data collection set were timed when teacher leaders were embarking on their action research (in December of 2012), part-way through their research, and shortly after they completed their work (in May of 2013). The interviews for the second data collection set occurred after some time had lapsed since completion of their action research, in order to see continuing implementation and use of knowledge and skills gleaned from action research, and to see additional shifts or changes in career trajectories and development of leadership. These were critical junctures in their work, reflecting a before, during, and after sequence. Semi-structured interviews were especially useful for uncovering the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs of the participants (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2003). According to Patton, "we interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe" (p. 340); I used these interviews to gain insight and be better able to *see* those things that I could not directly observe. Through the interviews and analysis completed in the first round of data collection, I worked to discover what participants learned from the action research process. Through the second round of interviews, I saw the ongoing and continuous

nature or the work and a promotion of inquiry as stance, as the leaders grew in leadership practice and roles.

When conducting semi-structured interviews, in line with Merriam's (2009) work, I used an "interview guide," which "includes a mix of more and less structured interview questions" (p. 89). I piloted the interview questions and refined them to improve the questions and my interview techniques (Patton, 2003). This provided me an opportunity to rethink, reconsider, and rewrite the questions based on feedback to improve the interview protocol(s). The interview guide(s) contain sections with broader and more general questions that correspond to the research areas (i.e., Teacher Leadership, Teacher Leadership Development, Action Research) and included possible probes to ask as follow-up questions (see Appendix A). These interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim for later analysis. Transcripts were shared with participants to member-check the data for accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2003). Additionally, to provide confidentiality and minimize harm, a pseudonym was assigned to each participant to prevent against disclosure, and a reference document linking pseudonyms with identifying information was kept in a separate, secure location.

Observations

I also drew upon observation data, as my colleague and I observed these teacher leaders during the first round of data collection, while they worked on their action research projects. According to Merriam (2009), "observation is the best technique to use when an activity, event, or situation can be observed firsthand" (p. 119). Our observations took place as the teacher leaders worked in their school and district settings. We observed them interacting with classroom teachers with whom they conducted their action research, working in classrooms and conducting/leading professional development. We conducted two to four observations, up to two

hours in length, of each teacher leader in their work setting. We also observed them as learners, taking detailed observation notes and collecting artifacts. These observations occurred as they worked in their classes to complete their action research (three observations for each context). The observations took place between December 2012 and March 2013, after which most participants had completed their data collection and were in the writing stage of their projects.

I conducted another round of observations in their work settings in the fall of 2014 in order to provide an additional data point that would build and strengthen these case studies. Through this second round of observation, I was able to see the continued growth and development of these teacher leaders, thereby helping me to inquire into the growth in their knowledge, skills, and practices, as well as the trajectory of their leadership development. Coupled with informal interviewing, these second-round observations helped me to see if there was a long-lasting or continued impact on their work of their action research experience, and to understand what that was, how it functioned in their work, and how it shaped their membership in schools.

All observations were hand-recorded in narrative form; a few conversations were also audio-recorded and later transcribed. Through observation of these events and review of notes and transcripts, more data points were available to use, and data was further triangulated (see Appendix B). These teacher leaders were in the process of developing their design when we started our observations. As they conducted their action research studies, we were provided the opportunity to see some critical moments in watching them work with others. In the final data set of observations, I was able to capture an additional point in time, reflecting growth and development and work done post-action research.

Artifacts

I was purposeful in collecting data that provided a contextual basis to ground the teacher leaders' work within the complex setting of their action research experiences (Guba, 1981), and shed light on and make sense of these complex experiences. As such, I used the final product of the participants' action research (a paper) as a third data source. Participants submitted their final action research projects/papers in May of 2014, when they completed their action research and the requirement of a paper for their final submission as a requirement of their program (both for MIL and Highline). In these final papers the teacher leaders reflect back on the processes and changes made due to their action research. Additionally, I used each participants' artifacts leading up to their final paper (such as numerous iterations of their research questions and drafts of their final product) to triangulate this data. I also collected documents used in their teacher leadership work (i.e. rubrics for observation, meeting notes, protocols, and handouts). The final papers provided insight into each teacher leader's understanding of their own action research process and learning (see Appendix C).

These artifacts shed light on the teacher leaders' research process, thereby allowing me to triangulate what I learned from interviews and observations. This occurred because I am privy to, and therefore able to analyze and use, participants' data tables, interview protocols, and other research decisions and refinements made throughout their action research process. The artifacts of their final papers demonstrate their learning and growth.

Data Analysis Approach

In my data analysis, I brought ideas regarding social practice and social theories of learning and identity to this work (Rogoff, 1995; Wenger, 1999). Using the framing literature

and my research questions as a starting point, I developed hypotheses and questions about the relationship between participation in action research and teacher leadership development. Data were analyzed inductively, seeking to find patterns and relationships (Gay et al., 2006). Every interview was listened to, re-listened to, and reiteratively read in its entirety, which "encourages recognizing patterns and making comparisons" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 145). My data analysis steps included an initial reading and open coding of all relevant data (Emerson et al., 1995), during which I noted emergent themes and trends in the data to narrow my focus and develop a focused code list. I iteratively read the interview transcripts to identify emerging patterns and themes. I then re-read each case participant's interviews to understand the story of each individual case as it grew from each participant's data. I developed a code set (reflecting my research questions) and *open* coding (to capture emerging themes as per each individual case and to capture cross-case themes). I hand-coded all of the data and built coded data displays for each participant (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to organize and make sense of their work. As I undertook this process of coding, this approach allowed me to break data into analyzable units from the interviews, observations, and artifact evidence (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). As a result of this coding approach, I was able to conceptualize the data, raise questions, and provide preliminary linkages within and among the participants' data (Strauss, 1987). I constructed analytic categories directly from the data, which forced my attention to "study the meanings, intentions, and actions of the research participants" (Charmaz, 2001, p. 337). Through coding, I saw data and themes emerge across cases from the interviews, observations, and artifacts (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). I worked to compare and contrast the data from these various sources in order to make sense of the work and to start to build a bigger picture of what the data said.

In order to build these cases and see the data and trends, I created charts (data displays) with the most relevant data connected to my codes and themes. Doing so allowed me to organize and make sense of all of the complex features influencing teacher leaders' perceptions of themselves, their roles, their identities, and enactment of their roles (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I built these data displays out over and across the various events, observations, and artifacts. In doing so, I found instances of changes in practice and identity. As a result of this work, I am also better able to understand how the process of taking on action research may provide the means for these shifts. I created notes and memos and was able to link evidence to my research questions and theoretical framework (Merriam, 2009). I reflected on my data analysis processes throughout by creating memos, linking the emerging evidence to my research questions and theoretical frameworks (Merriam, 2009). Through review of these notes and memos, I honed in on relevant areas of the data to revisit in order to gain deeper understanding and recognize emergent patterns. Having multiple interviews, observations, and data points with the participants allowed me the opportunity to revisit this data and gain a richer understanding of the phenomenon and build stronger cases for this study from their perspectives (see Appendices A, B, C). The development of cross-case hypotheses from the data emerged. These hypotheses served to answer research questions focusing on teacher leader development and changes in practice, to "study the meaning, intentions, and actions of the research participants" (Charmaz, 2001, p. 337). In examining their final interviews and thorough analysis of their completed research papers and presentations, there is evidence of the impact of their work. I was able to compare interview and observation data across time points. My goal in this study was to understand what was happening and why. I strove to make my findings meaningful by connecting to their "knowledge, experience, and understandings" (Gay et al., 2006, p. 426). I did

this through examining evidence and using it to build case studies through an illuminative description of participants' experiences.

My conceptual framework required adjustments based on what I saw in the data. I also analyzed the data using the literature. I did this to strengthen my argument and claims and see this work in a larger context. A strategy for this work was to pull out key quotes from my participants that demonstrate their learning and get at the essence of their work and their achievements. I developed emerging understandings from these key quotes, and matched them with themes in the literature. In the event that they did not match or map on to themes in the literature, I revisited the literature and added more knowledge and research to my literature base. When themes emerged from the data that were new and/or different, I explored additional areas of literature in order to better understand the phenomena in the data. I mapped my findings onto my conceptual framework and adjusted my conceptual framework to fit with my data and my findings. The major organizers are the themes of teacher leadership identity development and changes in practice; these themes are reflected in my research questions.

Limitations in the Research Design

A limitation of this design includes the fact that in qualitative case study, the researcher is the primary data collection tool. My data analysis was vulnerable to my interpretations and biases as a researcher (Glesne & Peshkin, 1999). This was especially true as I approached the data and started to see patterns and/or make "stories" (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I am also aware of the fact that I have additional biases as a teacher leader myself. Having intimate knowledge of this work may have caused me to jump to conclusions, though it can also sensitize me to subtleties in the work that other scholars might miss. Through this process, I developed

relationships with these individuals and worked to build rapport and trust. I am also a teacher and a scholar, so there are commonalities there that cause me to feel that I have become a friend to some participants. This relationship and my biases could have possibly influenced my conclusions. In order to address my biases, it was necessary to seek out additional evidence to support emerging patterns. I also worked to acknowledge and account for disconfirming evidence as it appeared (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Another safe-guard against this that I used was sharing my conclusions from the data and using member-checks (Miles & Huberman, 1994) as a method to confirm or disconfirm what I saw in the data.

Another limitation in my research design is the self-reported data of participants on their own growth and development. Self-report studies have many advantages, but they also suffer from specific disadvantages. For instance, self-reported answers may be exaggerated; respondents may forget specific details; and various biases may affect the results. The great advantage of self-report is that it gives you the respondents' own views directly. It gives access to phenomenological data, that is, respondents' perceptions of themselves and their world, which are unobtainable in any other way. Furthermore, self-report methods can be used to obtain information in situations where observational data are not normally available. The main disadvantage of self-report is that there are potential validity problems associated with it. The data are personal and idiosyncratic and thus may bear little relationship to *reality*, as seen by you or others. More importantly, people are not always truthful. Furthermore, research participants may not be able to provide the level of detail, or use the concepts, that the researcher is interested in. Subjects may also forget pertinent details. Researchers have argued that people often do not know what influences their behavior, and that there are pervasive biases in the way that we account for our own and others' behavior. One common source of bias, known as the actor–

observer effect, is the tendency or people to say that their own behavior is caused by situational factors and that other people's behavior is caused by dispositional factors (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Jones & Nisbett, 1971).

However, this does not mean that all self-report data are invalid, only that they cannot be trusted in all cases (Ericsson & Simon, 1993). All measurement methods have limits, and the potential limitations of the data must be considered at the analysis and interpretation stage. Thus, we should not abandon this method of data collection, although it is often advisable to supplement self-report data with observational data (or at least self-report data from other perspectives). I have worked to guard against the limitations in self-report data by conducting multiple interviews and observations over a period of time. I have also incorporated safe guards into my interview protocols by asking follow-up questions, providing scenarios, probing for details, and paraphrasing participants' responses to check for accuracy and make sure I understand what they are saying. In addition to the in-person interviews, I also asked for data in written form, over email and through a questionnaire. Transcripts were shared with participants to member-check for accuracy and ask for any corrections, additions, and deletions, as well.

In what follows, I present the study's findings first in terms of highlighting the specific context of the teacher leader's work, in terms of the communities of practice (schools, districts, buildings) in which they operated. I present three of the six individual cases first, as these three are illustrative of the larger pool of participants, yet as the data shows, there are subtle differences in each case, each individual, and their teacher leadership work. Additionally, these cases show the individualized and differentiated roles of teacher leadership, and action research, as the cases provide information on some of the participant's action research work. From these case studies as examples, I then (in Chapter 5) go on to present my findings in a more thematic

and structured way, tied to themes in the literature and my conceptual framework as the data shows these participants as learners in the contexts of their schools, districts, and programs where they learned the processes of action research.

CHAPTER 4.

Portraits of Learning to Lead Through Action Research: Three Illustrative Cases

The engagement of teacher leaders with action research, and its effects on their development of a teacher leadership identify and associated skills as an instructional leader, are best understood first within the individual cases. Each participant brought a different history with leadership work (all have at least some time working with colleagues and some had done so for a number of years), and they worked in different contexts. In addition, they tackled different action research projects, keyed to their local context, their own interests, and their colleagues' needs.

Consequently during a first stage of the analytic work in this dissertation, I constructed individual profiles of each of the six teacher leaders, organized around a common template of analytic concerns. I present three of those below in this chapter, chosen to represent a wide range of the individual situations, action research experiences, and effects on leadership development. I provide a synopsis of each of these three illustrative cases, and then proceed to go into more detail. In the ensuing chapter, I look across all six, and offer cross case findings.

Marcie:

Finding a New Space for School-Wide Engagement of Colleagues in Literacy Learning

Marcie grew into teacher leadership and was able to see herself and the work she can do to impact education in new ways. She learned about group dynamics and the ways in which teachers learn and try on new educational strategies. Marcie viewed action research as a technical endeavor, infusing herself into the work, but largely maintaining an academic focus throughout this work. Marcie does not see the power and influence she can wield in this

position. She did not have to persevere in the same way as other teacher leaders do, as her role as a classroom teacher stayed the same, and she is limited in her scope and reach as a teacher leader because of the limitations of working in a small, rural, traditional school district that does not employ teacher leaders.

Background

Marcie is a classroom teacher at a suburban-rural middle school in Eiderdown, where the student population is fairly homogeneous and 13% of students receive free and reduced lunch. It is a fairly small town and community, and the community and families support the school through fundraising, activites, and events. Sporting events are well attended by parents and community members, and are a main entertainment draw in the area. Marcie has worked at this middle school for her entire teaching career. She has taught both English Language Arts, which she currently teaches, and also science. Her husband teaches science at the same school where Marcie works. Prior to becoming a teacher, Marcie was a stay-at-home mom. Marcie was drawn to the Master's in Leadership Program at UW by her desire to advance on the salary schedule.

Marcie's Action Research Project

Marcie focused on how to implement common core standards in literacy across the curriculum, specifically using the science department. As a member of her school's leadership team, Marcie also used her teacher leadership and action research work to change practices both in the science department and across the school to increase student talk, student engagement, and student work using common core literacy standards across the curriculum. Marcie's action research project began as a problem of practice, as she wanted to investigate what teachers were

doing, across the curriculum and outside of just the subject of English Language Arts, to improve students' literacy learning. Specifically, she became interested in how Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in literacy were being used in other classes. Marcie chose to focus on the science department in her school, as she felt that at least two out of the three teachers in this department were open to learning about the shifts in literacy instruction across the curriculum mandated by common core, and she felt that she had a solid relationship with these individuals that could aid her in doing her action research work. She had mostly (2 out of 3) eager adult learners, and all three were willing to participate in Marcie's action research study.

In order to both teach and learn more about the shifts in common core and how they were being adopted in the science classroom, Marcie investigated the following research questions:

- What are the current practices within our building in the content area of science that support literacy standards?
- Will collaborative lesson planning and peer observations encourage teachers to implement literacy standards as described by the CCSS and utilize literacy strategies in their instruction?
- What lasting impact will these professional development opportunities have on a teacher's practice?

To address these questions, Marcie began by conducting observations of the science teachers in their classrooms, so that she could answer her first research question and determine the intervention that might best aid these teachers in implementing common core literacy standards in their science classrooms. From there, Marcie determined areas of need, as she worked through this problem of practice, and created and designed a plan for professional development for the science teachers in order to address these needs and fill the common core gap in literacy learning that was her problem of practice.

She carried out professional development for the science teachers around common core literacy standards, providing texts and modeling lesson and instructional strategies to help tailor and shape the science's teachers' work in implementing these standards. She describes this work as follows: "In its simplest form was that we did this training about disciplinary literacy and I introduced some things that they could try but I don't think they actually saw that they could do it until we sat down and hammered it all out together." Marcie summed up her action research project in this way, after the completion of the work at the end of the 2013 school year, in her spring interview. In this definition of her action research work, Marcie does not give herself credit for the large role she played in bringing these teachers together and leading them through this work. Marcie arranged for release time for all three of these teachers to observe each other in their classrooms. She also worked with them to provide feedback about their teaching, lesson, and implementation of common core literacy standards in science. After all of the teachers observed each other, Marcie led a group debrief concerning their shifts in practice that had occurred as a result of this work. Marcie noted:

> There was positive response from all teachers about the collaborative lesson planning day. These teachers all believe that the most impactful professional development allows teachers to have a "hands-on" experience in which they plan for an actual lesson to be implemented and observe another teacher modeling how to present a lesson. L.H. stated that the "collaboration on the lesson together went well. I liked that the whole planning day was done together and that we weren't each assigned separate jobs. All were committed equally to the task."

She guided their reflection around these observations and their own changes in practice, as she coached them and worked alongside them to measure the impact of the implementation of these standards on their students' learning. Marcie gathered and analyzed both student work and teacher perception data throughout, asking the teachers questions about the changes or shifts in

their teaching, and their own successes and challenges in implementing common core literacy standards in the science classroom.

She made sense of the work and the outcomes through a thorough analysis of student work. Through the process of having all of the science teachers observe each other, all teaching the same common core aligned lesson, marcie was able to build on a common experience and coach the teachers through a reflective process regarding their work.

Relationships and Support for Marcie's Teacher Leadership Work

Marcie's principal Gwen is very supportive of her teacher leadership work. She provided financial and logistical support in terms of providing substitutes for Marcie and the science department as they worked together to craft and implement their lesson plans focused on common core literacy standards. Gwen also provided substitutes for Marcie and the science teachers so that they could observe their peers teaching the common core literacy lessons in their science classrooms and have time together to debrief this experience. In addition, Gwen also helped Marcie identify the science department as the department to work with to implement these common core standards and to complete her action research project. Marcie describes this process:

> Like I said, I wanted to do something different than just my own tiny little PLC because it was just a little bit too close. The science teachers I worked with … for a while, I was science and English and I was part of the science PLC. I've taught with those teachers for quite a long time…I sat down and talked to my principal. We decided I should focus on one content and she thought whatever I wanted to do. I went and talked to the science teachers and they were willing to jump in and try some things with me.

The principal coached Marcie through her action research work and the process of working with the science department to build lesson plans and conduct observations and debrief those

experiences. Marcie was able to spread her teacher leadership work further as a member of the school's leadership team, as she has facilitated professional development during her school's Professional Learning Community (PLC) work.

Marcie had built-in relationships with the teachers in the science department at her school, as she is a former member of this department, and her husband is currently a teacher in the science department. She has trust and rapport with these teachers, and they are familiar with her communication and teaching style and have confidence and faith in Marcie and her work. These relationships provided Marcie an entry point to complete her action research work with this department. Marcie's principal helped to carve out space and time for Marcie to complete her action research. Without the driver of action research, Marcie would not have had the same space for self-reflection, nor the intensive coaching relationship with her principal. As a result of her action research work, Marcie was granted autonomy and trust by her principal as well.

Finding a New Space for Working with Colleagues

Building on her already existing base of rapport and access to colleagues, the process of action research provided a vehicle for Marcie to engage with and develop her teacher leadership. She also learned a lot about group dynamics, leading groups, and working with individual teachers. Marcie learned about the egalitarian culture of teaching, and the vast differences in her peers' level of engagement and implementation of new skills. She also was able to find and create a new space for collaboration, observation, and peer feedback. In this space, Marcie saw strengths and weaknesses in the other teachers she works with, as some were eager and willing to try new things, and others were not. These teachers let this collaborative inquiry work drive the instruction and practices throughout their curriculum:

> The science teachers in the study were very receptive to the strategies and literacy expertise I could offer them through this intervention. They were enthusiastic and willing to try everything I presented. After the intervention, they have articulated the desire to work more closely with the English department on other strategies they can implement in their science classroom.

These science teachers continued to look for ways to implement common core literacy standards in their instruction.

As Marcie noted, her action research work was met with some challenges, as the teachers that Marcie worked with were initially resistant to the work; they feared the unknown and were nervous about opening up their classrooms to others for observation and feedback. After Marcie implemented her intervention, she saw that teachers were becoming more open in their practice, "We did a quick debrief afterwards. They liked the process. One teacher said, 'We really to had to have trusted each other first. I've worked with some groups; we've had some groups we couldn't have done this with.' Just my outside observations, it created some anxiety." She notes that for this particular group, the process seemed to work well, but that trusting relationships were the building block or foundational piece necessary in order to make her leadership work possible. Even under Marcie's leadership, with a clear purpose, focus, and guided outcomes, she notes that there was still some anxiety. This leadership work is not easy and it requires trust to move forward. In the end, Marcie came to the following conclusion about teachers and their changing (or unchanging, as the case may be) practices, "Some teachers are eager to grow, to learn, and to change and try new things. Others are more reluctant and even through they see the value in the work (CCSS literacy implementation in science), still they don't always change their practice." This outcome seemed to stay with and perhaps even haunt Marcie, as she continually considered what it was that made some teachers shift their practice and embrace her leadership

while others were still resistant, even after having seen the value in this collaborative collegial work.

Through her action research, Marcie gained new authority as a member of the school leadership team, as she worked on engagement strategies across the curriculum and school-wide. Marcie talked about this shift in her work, saying:

> [previously] you really weren't considered as an instructional leader and there's been a shift with our new principal. When she took over, that was really the shift we started moving towards, which I think that's a more important role as a teacher leader. I enjoy that role more about helping people whether it's curriculum decisions or how to communicate.

She began to see herself as an instructional leader. This happened both through the faith and trust that Gwen instilled in Marcie, and as a result of her engagement in action research. I observed Marcie in action, as a member of the school leadership team, on a few occasions. In one instance, I observed Marcie and her peers (on the school leadership team) as they worked together to calibrate their responses to observations, using a data collection tool to record and reflect on what they saw in their peers' classrooms. Because of her involvement in the Masters in Leadership Program, Marcie was seen as a valuable member of the leadership team. Additionally, Marcie's principal entrusted her to lead PLC meetings. Marcie noted that she "…enjoyed facilitation of small groups more, and enjoyed facilitation of large groups less," but that overall, "it was fun. I enjoyed the work." In observing Marcie's leadership in this PLC setting, as she led her PLC group through a process for looking at student work, her leadership skills were evident. She grew in her skills and abilities in facilitating adult learning. Marcie noted that through this process, she gained, "increased confidence," and that she now sees herself

as a "leader." She also sees other possibilities to work with other departments and to enlist other literacy teachers to help implement CCSS in literacy across the curriculum.

Ellen:

Grappling with Identity as a Teacher Leader

Ellen's experience presents a case of action research that provided a space to examine and reflect on her role in her context and to develop new ways of working in that context. Through her action research project, Ellen grappled with her role as a teacher-leader, separate from classroom teachers. She was forced to engage in work that pushed her past her comfort zone, and in the process, built new practices specific to working more effectively within the constraints of her context. This summary outlines the ways that action research acted as a vehicle for Ellen to change and develop her understanding, her practice, and her identity as a teacher-leader.

Background

Ellen works as an instructional coach at a mid-sized elementary school in an upper-middle class neighborhood. Currently in her second year in her position, Ellen comes to her job after 10 years as a classroom teacher and 1 year as a reading intervention specialist. She was attracted to her current position because of a desire to engage with teachers in a coaching or mentoring role. She works half time and shares her job with a partner, with whom she works closely and maintains a supportive relationship.

During her first days in her position at the school, Ellen perceived significant resistance to her work and distrust from the staff. After conducting a small-scale action research project, she concluded that the staff had a history of negative experiences with past individuals in her

current role. She learned that the staff associated instructional coaches with administration and worried that her presence in their classroom would be critical and evaluative, rather than supportive. While Ellen noted staff members' hesitance to work with her, she also observed that the staff were very friendly to each other, maintaining congenial relationships across the school.

Ellen's Action Research Project

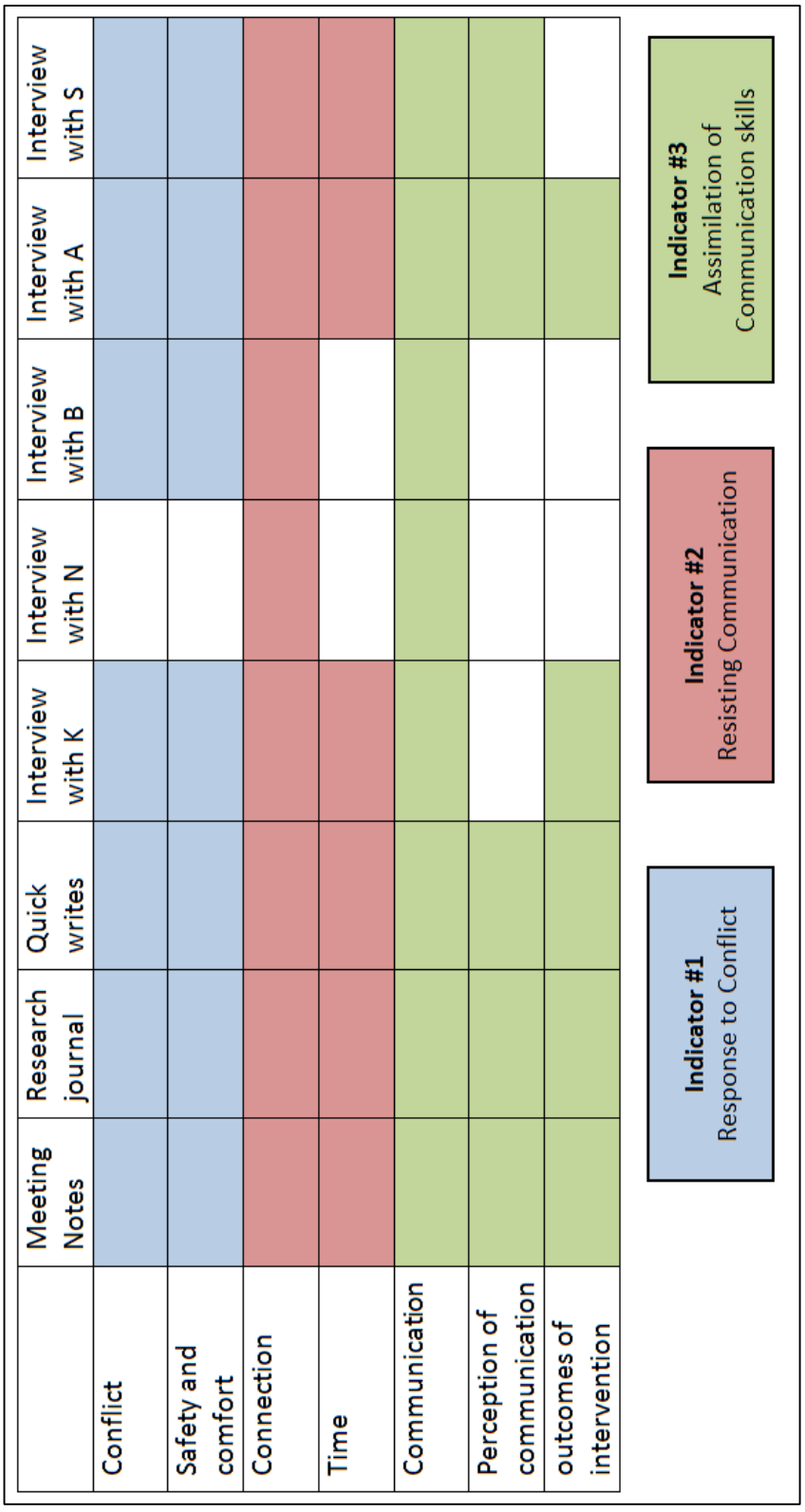
Hoping to change the staff's working relationships, Ellen set up her action research project with the intention of earning trust. She also hoped to find an entry point for her instructional coaching work by facilitating more instructional, rather than personal, conversation between staff members. Ellen chose to focus on the instructional leadership team, reasoning that changing the way that these teacher leaders collaborate with one another might help spread new ways of working school-wide, leading to better outcomes for students. Hoping to build a safe space for challenging instructional conversations to occur, Ellen decided to introduce specific discussion protocols to the instructional leadership team. She hoped that explicitness about communication would build staff members' awareness of how they approached instructional conversations with the goal of moving to more collegial, less congenial conversations of instructional improvement. Ellen asked, "How can teaching specific communication skills impact our professional relationships?"

Ellen was very interested in processes and methods of communication that could better move instructional practice forward. She also saw the staff and their current practices as dichotomous; while one group focused their conversations on instruction, the other group, who exhibited lower levels of participation, carried on more social conversations. Here Ellen describes this dichotomy, and how she came to the focus of her action research:

> I started to wonder about the nature of the relationships between participants. I noticed that the ILT and PLC teams who demonstrated a high level of participation seemed to be able to talk about anything. They routinely questioned assumptions about students and teaching, and weren't afraid to acknowledge that they didn't know the answers to their questions. On the other end of the spectrum, staff members at schools who demonstrated low participation seemed to focus their interactions on more social conversations like entertaining anecdotes about the classroom or complaints about administration. In wondering about these ideas as they relate to my current environment, I developed these research questions:
>
> - How do relationships in schools manifest in the way teachers communicate?
> - How can explicitly building communication skills impact professional relationships and the way instructional leaders work together?"

In order to investigate her research questions, Ellen adopted an inquiry stance to inquire into the current practices in her team. She led with research, which she used in her intervention into the problem of practice she identified for her action research project. Once Ellen introduced new ways of communicating, she then had the staff conduct a self-assessment of their communication skills and dispositions. Ellen worked to triangulate her data through interviews, artifact collection and analysis, and through meeting notes, her own journal, entries, and observations of meetings and events. In her analysis, Ellen used a table to uncover emergent themes and to better see what her data said (Table 4).

Table 4. Ellen's Data-Collection System



Grappling with Identity as a Teacher Leader

As she worked through her action research, Ellen examined her relationships and ways of working and confronted a tension in her own role. Still relatively new to her school, Ellen was working hard to establish relationships with teachers. While Ellen viewed herself as a peer, she encountered initial resistance from other teachers as she attempted to establish working relationships. At the beginning of her action research process, Ellen discussed her disappointment with the fact that the teachers at her school did not welcome her as a colleague. In discussion with a small group in her Master in Instructional Leadership (MIL) seminar, she compared her experiences to one of the vignettes from a reading. She said:

> I related to that vignette. Especially when she encountered that attitude of "You're not a teacher anymore, so we can't talk to you." As a teacher leader, you can feel excluded, are people no longer trust you. I had an experience where I dropped in on a teacher because I had a few minutes and I was curious to see what was happening in her classroom. She looked completely freaked out and thought that I was there to evaluate her. Even though it isn't true, teachers have this perception that you have some extra power and that you are supervising them.

She grappled with the challenge inherent in her role in which she needed to push teachers to improve and but also needed to maintain trusting peer relationships to ensure collaboration with colleagues. She expressed the difficultly of this balance, saying:

> You can't, as a teacher leader, if you're not in the classroom, pretend that you're still a teacher. It's just not possible, but I'm still trying to find ways to still make that connection. In reflecting on my first year, one of my biggest disappointments is that I feel like I sold myself short or sold out my beliefs as a teacher in order to make connections with teachers.

Ellen higlights the tensions inherent in teacher leadership, also captured by Killion (2008) in "Are You Coaching Heavy or Light." According to Killion, coaching light occurs when coaches want to build and maintain relationships more than they want to improve teaching and learning.

When coaching heavy, coaches work outside their comfort zone and stretch their coaching skills, content knowledge, leadership skills, relationship skills, and instructional skills. However, as she examined her dissatisfaction with the progress of instructional change, Ellen realized that she needed to find ways to push teachers to try new practices.

Throughout the course of her action research work, Ellen confronted her desire to build relationships with colleagues and her need to push for changes in teacher practice. In one meeting midway through her project, teachers struggled with how to share student work to produce vertical alignment in writing. Ellen suspected that there was some anxiety stemming from having to make student work public, as evidenced by the following exchange.

> Principal: We need to have a baseline for what kids can do now in their writing, so that means at an independent level.
>
> Teacher 1: But we are not sure what that means. Do we teach the rubric? Are we providing a rubric that we know kids can access?
>
> Teacher 2: Are we giving students prompts that follow from what they are learning in class or something else? Are we prepping the students?
>
> Ellen: Is the anxiety level coming from having to show others student work?
>
> Teacher 3: I don't think so. I think it is more about logistics.
>
> Teacher 2: I think this is useful for setting our lens together and building understanding vertically across grade levels, but we need to communicate the purpose and how the prompt will be used.
>
> Teacher 1: I think there is also some anxiety about how much time this will take.

Disappointed with the way the discussion went, Ellen guessed that teachers perceived her questions as judgmental. After I observed her work with her teacher-colleagues early on in the action research process and then sat down with Ellen to debrief the work, Ellen said:

> Based on what they said, it seems like they are focused on looking for connections to their classroom work and they don't prioritize collaboration. I have

> gotten feedback that my questions aren't that useful for them, and I get the feeling that people don't appreciate the kind of questions I asked today.

From this experience, she expressed an intention to shift to more open-ended questions to build trust.

At a later point in her research, Ellen pursued a difficult topic with a colleague in the public space of the instructional leadership team meeting. Ellen worried that the confrontation may have made some of her colleagues uncomfortable and less likely to work with her in the future, but she discovered that a number of her colleagues were willing to participate in productive, if uncomfortable conversations. This led Ellen to engage one of her colleagues, Keeley, in a discussion about her perceptions of the group's communication. Keeley expressed concerns about the group's "sugar-coating" to preserve feelings getting in the way of teacher learning. Ellen agreed with Keeley's assessment and this prompted her to consider the necessity of finding safe ways of confronting difficult ideas, showing movement for Ellen toward coaching heavy (Killion, 2008). Killion notes that coaching heavy occurs when coaches ask thought-provoking questions, uncover assumptions, and engage teachers in dialogue about their beliefs and goals rather than focusing only on teacher knowledge and skills. Ellen attempted to shift her practice and balance the use of both coaching heavy and coaching light, developing and implementing new skills and new ways of working into her teacher leadership repertoire.

Through the action research cycle, Ellen's new insights into the problem lead to new actions, which in turn brought her new understanding. She reflects:

> I think even if there was resistance to this, they saw that I had this knowledge base and that I was going to persevere even if they weren't. I'm willing to ask questions that make them uncomfortable, changing their perception of being a good leader and changing my perception of myself doing things that I am not comfortable with and being able to reflect on my weaknesses as a leader. That's

> something I think I'm really good at as a teacher, which made me a good teacher because I was always identifying things that I wanted to improve on.

Ellen's action research process included systematic self-reflection and close examination of her unique struggles, yielding specific knowledge to drive her own practice. About the action research, she explained:

> But this is much more meaningful and if I made myself be more formal and accountable, I think I would have more success and feel more satisfied with what I do. That's something I wrote about in my paper about my idea of what this job would be and the reality and I am not super satisfied with the progress that I've made and work that I've done and maybe that's because I don't follow through when things get difficult. I back off. At the same time, I want to respect teachers and where they are coming from because I know where they are coming from.

For Ellen, the action research process provided the impetus for finding and trying new ways of working that ultimately changed her practice. With the action research as an excuse, Ellen persisted in her work with colleagues far past the point of her own comfort, which lead her to realize some of the changes in teacher practice that she had hoped for. In her final action resarch paper, reflecting on her experiences as a teacher leader in tackling this problem of practice for her action research project, she wrote:

> As it was, I would have given up very early on if I had not been conducting this action research. Thinking about this fact in relation to my everyday work as an instructional leader, I realize that I give in to this compulsion far too often. I constantly have an internal dialogue about how teachers really don't have the time to work with me. 'They have so much on their plate. I really am bothering them and they are not getting anything out of it.' And so I sometimes give in and abandon the work I've started with teachers. This accounts for a growing dissatisfaction in my work. Because I do not push myself to follow through, there are less positive results that come from my coaching that might motivate me to continue. I'm finding that perhaps this is not solely a result of the culture in which I work, but also because I need to build my capacity to endure. Within my research project, I was able to push forward and essentially blame it on my research project.

The new practices Ellen employed as part of her action research pushed her out of her comfort zone, but allowed her to develop insight into her own ways of working that will also help her see more success in the future. As a result of her new willingness to maintain her encouragement and pressure on teachers, Ellen noted that her relationship with teachers changed. In an interview with Ellen at the completion of her action research project, in the spring of 2013, Ellen noted:

> I think it definitely pushed me to do things that I wasn't comfortable with as a leader, which I would like to think changed people's perception of me as a leader. I think when you are starting a new school, you have to build an identity for yourself from the perspective of other teachers and you can't force that down their throats.

Ellen took on and further developed a new identity through her teacher leadership work. This is evident in her noting that "you have to build an identity for yourself," and also in the fact that she notes changes that occurred in her view of herself and in others' views of her as a leader. Ellen also learned new ways of working, as she notes with being pushed to do new and different things, and also the finesse of leadership, in that you cannot force your agenda on others and call it leadership. She is starting to see herself in this work, and that certain practices lend themselves to leadership, while others simply don't.

Brenda:

Building Relationships and Shifting Thinking Through Action Research

Action research provided Brenda an opportunity to grow into teacher leadership and hone her coaching skills. Brenda's work is a case of new learning, new leadership, and self-discovery as she started to see herself as a teacher leader as a result of engaging in action research. She saw her role and her work in new and different ways as she shifted her practice and her view of

self as a peer to a coach, working one-on-one with Isabel, the cooperating teacher. Brenda navigated the consultant, collaborator, and coach roles in her work with Isabel, as she was a driver that pushed student achievement through changes in classroom practice to improve the dual language program. Brenda saw the larger impact that she can make in teachers' practice, and also in programmatic changes and work as her teacher leadership grew to be multi-faceted and increased in depth and strength through action research.

Background

Brenda is a teacher leader in her second year as an English language learner (ELL) facilitator in an urban school district on the outskirts of Seattle, serving a large number of students on free and reduced lunch, with a wide range of racial, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity. Prior to taking on this formal teacher leader position, Brenda taught fifth grade in eastern Washington, and prior to that, she substitute taught for 1 year. She also has experience teaching in Mexico. Brenda is a National Board Certified Teacher, and a Guided Language Acquisition and Development (GLAD) trainer. She has had extensive professional development in teacher leadership, mentoring, and action research as she has transitioned into her role as an ELL facilitator and formal teacher leader.

Brenda's Action Research Problem

This was Brenda's second consecutive year completing an action research project. As an ELL facilitator, Brenda worked with 9 out of the 18 elementary schools in her district, providing support and professional development for their staffs. Brenda's action research project focused primarily on the Dual Language Program at Hilltop Elementary, one of the district's Northern-most schools, bordering South Seattle. Brenda identified a teacher whom she felt that she could

work with, and a program she was familiar with and passionate about and eager to see some changes in. She chose to work with this teacher and program as she saw a lot of potential for growth and learning in the teacher. Brenda soon saw that she herself had room to grow in her coaching abilities as she worked with Isabel.

She often characterized the relationship in terms of working with Isabel as a peer or equal, and this is in part true, as they are both teachers and have experience working with children in schools, but Brenda's current work also goes beyond Isabel's classroom practice. Brenda has worked to hone and develop her skills as a teacher leader, mentor, facilitator, and coach; all of these important teacher leadership skills came into play in her work with Isabel on her action research project. Brenda saw potential for her own growth and her coaching practice through her action research work. Brenda expressed a desire to work side-by-side, as a peer and teammate with Isabel.

> My question is how can I help the teacher learn about second language development or oral language development, I'm not sure, and then what interventions can we try to increase oral language development. I really want Isabel to feel like she's a part of it. I don't want to go in there and say, "I want to do this, this, and this." I want her to be a part of it and say what she wants to do, but I have some ideas too about what I want to do. I want her… I think she is really turning into one of our really good teacher leaders in the dual language program. I want her to have success with, not just her class, but I want her to feel like she can share what's working with others. That's really important.

Brenda expressed these ideas in my intial interview with her, showing her view of herself as a peer-colleague to Isabel as she is starting to conceptualize how to approach and carryout the work. Brenda first saw her research problem as more academic, focusing on language development.

Once Brenda delved further into the work and started to conceptualize her research problem, she saw the need to work in different ways with the collaborating teacher. This marked a shift in her thinking and leadership development as she worked towards developing her teacher leadership practice, and discovering new ways of working and taking on more of a peer collaboration and coaching role. Brenda had to set up a process to work with teachers; to determine what their needs are, how to best address these needs, and to make decisions about instructional practice.

> The first piece that I really want to learn about is probably alongside Isabel. I want to learn more about specifically, I think about Spanish language development because I don't know, is it different than English language development, especially orally. Is it different or is there a different process? I don't know. That's one thing I'm interested in learning. The other piece I'm interested in is really how I'm supporting this teacher to do her own learning. I didn't realize I was interested in this, but now I am. I have to do some research on coaching and see how I can coach her.

Brenda first approached this problem of practice, that is "How do we increase students talking and working in Spanish?, as an academic problem and focussed on language development. Initially, she said that she wanted to learn alongside Isabel. Over time, this work shifted, and Brenda started to recognize and see that shift in her role here, as she noted that she had to "see how I can coach her" and learn how to work with Isabel in new ways. Because of her action research, Brenda's role in working with Isabel changed.

At first, she saw herself as a peer, working alongside Isabel, and over time, she reconceptualized her role as she starts to see her research problem in new ways. Brenda was a participant observer in the process, observing Isabel's classroom and her work, and gathering data to guide her coaching conversations and influence classroom practice in order to increase student achievement. An example of this is seen in Brenda's approach to her action research,

when she observed Isabel's classroom and took data on English versus Spanish spoken. She shared this data with Isabel, using the data as a third point, or a focal point for their planning and problem-resolving coaching conversations. During the course of their post-observation conversations, Brenda's role as coach clearly emerged, as she asked Isabel probing questions, "What might you do in order to increase students' use of Spanish?" And she affirmed Isabel's choices regarding how to make this shift in using more Spanish happen, as they created a plan together to increase students' use of Spanish. Brenda invested her time in Isabel's classroom, building that relationship, getting to know the teacher and the students. Brenda was aware of the strategies and practices that Isabel was using; she helped guide and influence Isabel's classroom instruction, and continued to be present and observe and take data throughout the process to better understand the changes that occured in the classroom that resulted in students using more Spanish and hence an overall improvement in the functioning of the dual language program.

Support for Action Research and Development of Teacher Leader Identity

Action research provided real-time professional development that was job-embedded. Brenda's learning was self-directed and authentic, as she decided on the problem of practice that was of interest to her. Brenda learned how to do the work of teacher leadership through job-alike mentors (Rose, ELL facilitator meetings) and the support of her peers. Brenda developed her identity as a teacher leader through this learning.

> I never saw myself as a leader. When I became a teacher I figured I would stay in the classroom forever and do my thing and people would leave me alone and that would be that. It just kind of started evolving that this was the direction that things were heading for me. I feel like part of what I learned I learned by non-example. I had some really poor leaders in my former district and I learned a lot that way. I learned a lot of, "that's not what I want to do. That's not what a good leader does."

In addition to the mentored action research, Brenda benefitted from seeing examples and non-examples of leadership. Part of this occurred through her interactions with her peers. The action research support provided in Ridgetop also included peer support, in Brenda's cohort. Through this, she was able to further develop her leadership identity, as seen in the above quote.

Action Research as an Occasion for Building Relationships and Leadership Identity

The process of action research provides a vehicle for teacher leaders to engage with and develop their teacher leadership skills and practice. The practice of teacher leadership creates a new space for teacher leaders to work with teachers, allowing for the development of both the teacher and the teacher leader through action research, as they focus together on specific problems of practice to work through these problems and come up with new and different ways of improving their instructional practice.

A critical component of this *new space* in which teacher leaders find themselves is the relationship(s) built and the renegotiation of those relationships between the teacher leader and those they are working with. Teacher leadership offers a unique opportunity for teachers to work with someone who is an insider, someone who knows about teaching and best practice, and whose interest is in helping you to improve your own practice as a teacher. Teacher leadership, coupled with action research as a driver for this collaborative work, provided Brenda with an impetus to build on her relationship with Isabel, to delve deeper and persist in her work. Brenda first saw herself as a peer, as she worked alongside Isabel. Because Brenda was working through this job embedded professional development work of action research, there was time and space allotted for her to observe Isabel's classroom, gather data as she observed, confer with Isabel and share her data, and work together to come up with new plans and solutions to this problem of practice.

Brenda felt the need to build her relationship with Isabel, and she worked to develop trust. Brenda knew that she had to complete her action research inquiry cycle, and she identified a problem of practice in a program that was of interest to her (the dual language program) and she identified a teacher who was willing to work with her (Isabel). Brenda noted that:

> I felt that there was a lot of trust needed; there was me being trusted, and trusting in the teacher as well that they would and could carry out these plans and do this and be successful in changing instruction and making an impact in their classroom.

Prior to becoming a teacher leader engaging in action research, there was little impetus to persist in this challenging work of building relationships. She noted that in the past, she would drop in, do a little work, and try on different roles in terms of coaching, facilitating, delivering professional development, and consulting, but there was little to no follow-up or follow-through to see that the changes in instruction were implemented at an individual classroom level.

With this action research work, Brenda saw a change in her persistence and stick-to-itiveness, where she was compelled by the action research work to continue to build her relationship with Isabel, through ongoing and consistent communication, classroom visits, and coaching sessions. Brenda noted that before, she would have shied away from this deeper level of coaching work, she would not have endeavored to create or enter this new shared space with other teachers, but because of her action research work, she continued on. Brenda's action research work created a long-range plan and way of working with Isabel, rather than a single intervention, which was often how Brenda had worked before.

Shift's in Brenda's Thinking

Part of the way that Brenda was able to develop this depth of understanding with Isabel was by her persistence and her ongoing work in Isabel's classroom with her students. In many interactions, I witnessed Brenda and Isabel discussing students' progress and students of concern. Brenda provided another set of eyes for Isabel, to take data during observations and hold up that mirror to shine light into Isabel's practice. This teacher leadership work in observing classroom practice and collecting data is different than other work done in education. As a teacher leader, Brenda's collection of data, driven by her action research project, was non-evaluative, and spoke to her interest in Isabel's work and her passion for the dual language program and her investment in Isabel's students and their classroom community and learning. An example of this is seen in a coaching conversation, where Brenda mentioned specific students and their behaviors by name, citing Bonnie and Art and their participation. Isabel reflected on her teaching in the moment, as she saw these students through her own eyes and through Brenda's eyes simultaneously, and used this informal assessment as data to drive her planning and instruction of these students.

Brenda:	The first thing I thought we'd talk about is what kind of trends we notice in the data, what do we see?
Speaker 2:	That all of the non-academic conversation that is going on still in English in the classroom.
Speaker 1:	Yeah and … what did you write here, Angie?
Speaker 2:	Angie.
Speaker 1:	When I asked her that day I asked her in Spanish, I said do you ever talk to your partner in Spanish? She said no. I said well why not, you're talking to me in Spanish. She said, 'Oh.' I was like interesting.

Creating this new space involves developing new understandings of different ways of working as a teacher leader, including consulting, providing support and resources, co-planning, interpreting data together, and coaching through these problems of practice. One way in which Brenda's work shifted is in the use of data to further her coaching of Isabel. For example, Brenda was involved in collecting data for her research project, and shared this with the teacher. This shows that action research created the needs for the use of data to better be able to view classroom practices. Additionally, data analysis provided another way of thinking and talking about practice, which helped Brenda to push their coaching work in this new space.

Shifts in Identity

Because of her action research work, Brenda's teacher leadership evolved as she worked with others in new ways in a new space, establishing her relationship with Isabel as she worked with her as a co-learner to help identify and rectify a problem of practice. Initially, Brenda was unsure of how to do this work and how to tackle this instructional problem of practice, but over time, there were shifts in her thinking. At first, Brenda's vision of leadership put her in a position to be more of one who knows, and she felt pressure to have answers to Isabel's problems in academic terms and a simple solution. Over time, through her action research, Brenda came to see the problem as more complex, and she realized that there was no easy or quick fix.

> In terms of my role and my learning about my teacher leadership work, it was nice to come in as a fellow learner, with a different lens. Not to prescribe things or know all the answers (inquiry as stance), but to problem solve and learn together, and be that sounding board for Isabel and help shape her classroom instruction and ideas.

Brenda's view of herself shifted from feeling that she had to come in to any given situation being the one who knows to seeing that there are many sides to any problem, and instead of offering solutions or quick fixes, the depth of her work involved coaching Isabel to come up with her own solutions and to help Isabel to see how well or poorly those changes in the classroom impacted student achievement. Brenda's work is seen in "Supervision for intelligent teaching" (cognitive coaching) by Costa and Garmston (1985). The ultimate goal of cognitive coaching is teacher autonomy: the ability to self-monitor, self-analyze, and self-evaluate. In early cycles of cognitive coaching, the coach must draw these capacities from the teacher, but as the cycles continue, a teacher begins to call upon them internally and direct them toward an area of personal interest. This progression is seen in Brenda's own work, and in her work with Isabel, as she analyzed and reflected, and led Isable to do the same through her coaching work. Action research allowed Brenda to learn with Isabel, to see a problem more fully, and to help Isabel see other possibilities in her teaching and her students' learning.

Brenda did this through classroom observations, meeting time with Isabel where they examined data together and Brenda engaged Isabel in coaching conversations, and continual communication and lots of follow-up where Brenda visited and revisited Isabel's classroom to see the agreed upon work and changes in progress. These new ways of working with others involve collaboration, redefining roles, repositioning, and establishing that relationship and trust as a peer colleague, working alongside teacher(s), guiding their thinking, work, and practice through teacher leadership. Brenda noted:

> The…important aspect of this research was the coaching relationship between Isabel and me. It was because of our professional connection that we were able to successfully get more kids talking, and the literature about peer coaching and teacher leadership helped me to define what happened during our work together.

Through action research, Brenda developed her teacher leadership practices in inquiry orientation, coaching and collaboration, reflection, and the use of data. She noted shifts in her practice:

> For me, there are implications for my practice in learning more about and getting experience in how to coach one-on-one, as this was really my first experience with long-term coaching. Previously, it was just like come in, talk a little bit, and then maybe observe, and that was it. This was more in depth and focused, but it was also a lot more time and labor intensive.

Brenda developed new knowledge and skills as she worked to deepen her coaching relationship and skills, creating challenge for herself and Isabel, and facilitating this work. Brenda's inquiry orientation grew (as did Marcie's and Rose's), as she came to see the action research process as a way to approach education; "Also, I see the action research cycle as a model for others and their work." She came to see and to consider future applications for the systematicity of using this inqiury cycle in her practice, as she had learned about and adopted an inquiry stance through conducting action research.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has shed some light on a cross section of specific cases, highlighting three out of the six as examples of the overall scope of the work. In these individual cases, the wide variance in projects, contexts, successes and challenges in taking on teacher leadership work can be seen. The mentored action research topics and questions also demonstrate the range of this work and the various problems of practice taken on by these teacher leaders. The outcomes of their projects bared some similarities and some differences, which are somewhat taken into account here, in this chapter. In the chapter that follows, I further explore these findings, and make cross-case comparisons as I discuss emergent themes found in more than one case. The

next chapter features data from all six cases, used to compare their learning as well as the outcomes, and processes they went through in conducting action research and their potential growth as teacher leaders as a result.

CHAPTER 5.

Cross-Case Findings:
Shaping Leadership Identity, Practices, and Systematic Approaches to Leadership Work

Across the different kinds of teacher leaders' experiences and settings described in Chapter 4 and their counterparts in the other three cases, action research provided a vehicle for teacher leaders to reconsider their role(s) and move from being a classroom teacher and a peer to taking on the role of being a teacher leader and coach. Through their engagement in action research, and continuing beyond the action research experience, I observed changes in their identities as leaders and in the practices that they employed in their leadership work. These teachers developed their identity as leaders and grew in confidence, coaching skills, facilitation skills, and improvement of their practice. Their dispositions changed as they developed knowledge and skills using inquiry cycles, and began working with an inquiry stance as they helped guide teachers' thinking and decision-making. Action research appeared to act as a vehicle through which they could try out new ideas or practices and then reflect on the impact of these practices on their work, their colleagues, and themselves. This process changed how the teacher leaders understood both their work and themselves as collaborators and leaders.

The portraits presented in Chapter 4 offered a first glimpse of these shifts for three of the teacher leaders and, in this chapter, I provide further examples of these changes, both for these three teacher leaders and for the other three (readers are encouraged to refer to Table 2 for brief summaries of the teacher leaders' action research projects), along with the main cross-case themes that were apparent in my data set. Though the cross-cutting patterns I describe apply in some degree to all six participants, they took a different form in each case. Accordingly, I have used one or several of the cases as exemplars for each of the different sub-processes at work.

The main findings from my cross-case analysis are presented below, organized by three main themes, each with several sub-themes:

1. developing teacher leader identity through
   (a) becoming a teacher leader,
   (b) defining the teacher leadership role, and
   (c) moving from peer to coach and facilitator;
2. developing teacher leadership practices through
   (a) relationships and
   (b) the use of data and inquiry; and
3. changing the ways teacher leaders work within systems to consider
   (a) developing systematic approaches to teacher leadership at the school level and district level.

Developing Teacher Leader Identity

As teachers engaged in leadership work, they renegotiated their relationships with colleagues, and also reconsidered their professional identities in light of their leadership role. This was a challenge that many of them faced, as internal conflicts involving their shifting and changing identity may present a significant challenge to both developing and sustaining teacher leadership (Lieberman & Friedrich, 2010). Smylie and Denny (1990) point out that this internal discord might influence the individual's job performance, even if there are no other barriers. As Chval et al. (2010) explain:

> Becoming an effective instructional coach also necessitates establishing an additional professional identity, a process that is not particularly overt and is often hidden from new coaches' peers and administrators. Paramount to the difficulty of this transition is the shift from expert to novice. (p. 192)

As teacher leaders learn to navigate these roles, they are often positioned in new ways. Stemming from these positional, external changes, internal identity development happens as they take on these new roles and develop their practices as teachers and leaders in new ways.

Throughout the course of my study, I observed the teacher leaders actively grappling with, reshaping, and developing awareness of their professional identities. In that process, their contexts, roles, and levels of experience influenced the way that development exhibited itself. This was especially noticeable in the cases of Brenda, Ellen, Marcie, and Callie. In what follows, I explore this theme of professional identities more deeply. The data taken from these cases provide a glimpse into their internal development of their professional identities as teacher leaders. Through engagement in the processes of action research and through enactment of their daily roles as teacher leaders and in carrying out this work, they created these additive identities and came to see themselves as leaders.

Becoming a Teacher Leader:
Brenda, Ellen, and Marcie

Action research provided a forum and a venue for Brenda, Ellen, and Marcie to consider their leadership identities more explicitly and systematically than they ever had before. Through their action research experiences, they found the time and structured guidance for self-reflection. Mentored action research provided Brenda, Ellen, and Marcie space to consider and explore the development of their emerging and changing identities as they engaged in an internal process of self-identification in relation to their work as teacher leaders. Through her research project, Brenda came face to face with her identity as a leader and coach; she was forced to confront her new self in this role and this emergent identity developing from her work in this position. Brenda initially resisted seeing herself as a leader, but through her action research work,

discussions with her advisor, and reflections on her processes and growth, she eventually came to embrace leadership as a part of her professional identity. Action research provided a space for Ellen and Marcie to more clearly see themselves and their roles as they engaged in an internal struggle to come to terms with their changing identities and changing relationships with classroom teachers. For Marcie, the development of this new identity as a teacher leader also involved seeing herself in different ways and working in new ways as she worked with her peers to coach and collaborate, working alongside them as both a leader and a peer to influence their classroom practices and their work.

Initially, working in contexts that value egalitarian relationships among teaching staff, the three either resisted seeing themselves as a "leader" or failed to understand and embrace the leadership dimensions of the activities that they engaged in with colleagues. When she started out on the action research road, for example, Brenda first saw herself and her role as providing resources and support for her colleagues. Initially, she did not see herself as a leader or coach. Brenda subscribed to the view of leadership as a formal and positional role, rather than a part of her personal identity. She saw leadership as an "other," as something else, sitting outside of her work and her experience. Brenda noted, when discussing her work as a teacher leader:

> I feel like I'm probably seen as a leader but it's not something that I think a lot about. I don't sit and think, "Oh, I'm an ELL leader." It's just my job. It's just what I come in and do.

She had an inkling that others might view her as a leader, although she did not yet embrace this part of her identity or see herself as a leader. Brenda seemed to view leadership as tied to a position, not who she was. Brenda outlined her trajectory and path into her teacher leadership work and role, saying:

> I never saw myself as a leader. When I became a teacher, I figured I would stay in the classroom forever and do my thing and people would leave me alone and that would be that. It just kind of started evolving that this was the direction that things were heading for me.

While Brenda's role had changed, she was hesitant to distinguish herself from classroom teachers—she views herself as a peer and is hesitant to challenge the egalitarian norms of teaching and teachers, careful not to position herself any differently as a teacher leader, even though the work is different and does call on a specific set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Through her action research and the process of analyzing her data, Brenda came face to face with her work as a coach and had to consider this work as a part of herself, her identity, and who she was becoming and growing into through her teacher leadership work. As Brenda is mentored and coached by her research advisor, through the action research process, she comes to see this growth in herself. In the following coaching conversation, which took place in an action research seminar in the Ridgetop School District, about half-way through the 2012-2013 school year, Brenda resists her research advisor's assertions that she is a coach for her collaborating teacher.

> Advisor: You went in and observed and gathered data, then you worked with her to come up with an objective, then you co-planned it together, and then she did it. Those are all parts you might call coaching or facilitating… What would you say about that?
>
> Brenda: It was something that she was interested in and excited about, and saw as a problem she wanted to fix, so I knew that she was someone who wanted to be coached. I didn't have to skate around the problem because we both agreed, "Okay, this is the problem of practice." I knew that whatever I did, I wanted her to be involved and I didn't want to tell her what to do. I wanted her to really instigate the work as much as possible, and so I knew that I would give her some ideas and suggestions but I wanted to let her take control of what we would do.

While Brenda was excited about the practices that she and Isabel designed and executed, she showed reluctance when her advisor suggested that she was the catalyst for learning. She noted that Isabel was someone "who wanted to be coached," but still had difficulty seeing herself as the coach.

By the conclusion of her action research project, however, Brenda seemed to accept and embrace her leadership identity. Her increased confidence was evident as she described her reflection process:

> I keep learning that people look to me as a leader and as a coach. I struggle with this role, but in terms of my learning, I really saw that I became more confident and feel good about the job that I do.

In stark contrast to her earlier ideas about leadership as positional and being embedded in a formal job title, this quote shows her acceptance that her work "counts" as leadership. In her final action research paper, submitted in the spring of 2013, she wrote:

> When I first set out to do this work with Isabel, I was thinking solely about the impact on students. I wanted to be part of the solution for the challenge Isabel was having in her dual language classroom. I hoped that the experience would impact Isabel and her teaching in a positive way. I did not expect to learn as much as I did about myself as a teacher, coach, and leader.

In this quote, she refers to herself explicitly as a leader and coach, indicating an acceptance of these facets of her professional identity as a result of her action research process.

Behind Brenda's initial reluctance to see herself as a leader and the experiences of other emerging teacher leaders lie meanings tied up with a complicated set of peer relationships and fears about what might change in those relationships. For Ellen, coming to terms with her new identity as a teacher leader was a difficult process involving loss of peer relationships with

classroom teachers. Her action research provided a space to reflect on and work through conflicted feelings about her professional identity. At the beginning of her action research, Ellen struggled to accept that her position made it difficult to maintain peer relationships with the teachers at her school. She expressed a strong sense of herself as a teacher leader, separate from classroom teachers, but experienced dissatisfaction with the distance that her leadership role created. During a university class, Ellen connected an example from a text to an incident she experienced with a teacher. She said:

> I related to that vignette. Especially when she encountered that attitude of 'You're not a teacher anymore, so we can't talk to you.' As a teacher leader, you can feel excluded, that people no longer trust you. I had an experience where I dropped in on a teacher because I had a few minutes and I was curious to see what was happening in her classroom. She looked completely freaked out and thought that I was there to evaluate her. Even though it isn't true, teachers have this perception that you have some extra power and that you are supervising them.

While Ellen considered herself a peer to this classroom teacher, this incident made her feel like an outsider. She expressed regret and a desire to find ways to re-establish collegial relationships. She commented, "You can't, as a teacher leader … if you're not in the classroom, pretend that you're still a teacher. It's just not possible, but I hope … I'm still trying to find ways to still make that connection." While she recognized her new identity as a teacher-leader, Ellen also mourned the loss of the bond she experienced with teachers when she was in her former position.

Ellen's action research pushed her to persist in engaging with teachers and, as a result, she came to new understanding about her own identity as a teacher leader. Ellen credited her action research with prompting her to confront the impulse to give in when teachers did not immediately respond to her. In her capstone paper, she wrote about this realization:

> As it was, I would have given up very early on if I had not been conducting this action research. Thinking about this fact in relation to my everyday work as an

> instructional leader, I realize that I give in to this compulsion far too often. I constantly have an internal dialogue about how teachers really don't have the time to work with me. "They have so much on their plate. I really am bothering them and they are not getting anything out of it." And so I sometimes give in and abandon the work I've started with teachers.

The action research helped Ellen see a change in herself, from a person who gives up in the face of a challenge to a person who perseveres in her work. Because of her action research, Ellen redefined her idea of herself as a leader. She commented:

> I don't really want to back off, because I have the persistence. I saw that there were changes and it was worth the time. Then I think- how many times do I back off when I shouldn't? I thought about maintaining collegial relationships. Do I prefer congenial relationships with people I work with? Because, I don't always push when I have a particular [difficult] instance. The research, I think, was a really good tool for me and I want to be able to continue that, maybe not in such a formal way, although the formal [process] really motivated me.

The perseverance that Ellen developed and demonstrated through her action research project helped her understand that her new relationships with teachers, while not always based on congeniality, could be productively collegial. Reflecting on her identity as a leader, it became easier for Ellen to let go of prior classroom teacher relationships and accept her role as a leader.

For all three, the identity shift meant coming to terms with a more differentiated sense of who they were in their respective professional staff contexts. Through taking on the action research process, Marcie came to see herself as more of a leader. She noted:

> I do realize that as a teacher leader and because of this work, I do know more. Through the coaching books, I have learned more about facilitating learning for teachers. I have learned more around coaching someone else's instruction, which I didn't know how to do before, and I have learned a lot about facilitating PD, so I think I have grown and changed in those areas as a result of this work and the books I've read and classes I've taken and things I've learned.

As Marcie had developed these teacher leader practices around facilitating teachers' learning and coaching, she had come to identify herself as someone who does "know more." She was cognizant of her newly emerging skills and abilities, and how these contributed to her newly forming identity as a teacher leader.

Marcie also began to see how things that she was doing are part of who she is as a teacher leader. Her identity was thus being shaped through the action research process, and she saw this manifested in shifts in her teacher leadership practice and work. She noted, "I am also grateful they trusted my expertise as an English teacher. They believed I had enough knowledge about literacy and science to link the two together." Marcie began to take ownership of her own knowledge and expertise, as she realized that these important components of her identity were seen by others and that they impacted and influenced her work as a teacher leader in working with others. In her final action research project paper, Marcie described some of the new and different teacher leadership work she did, throughout the action research process, to facilitate other teachers' learning. Marcie worked in different ways, noting:

> I continually assured them during our work together that it was going to be "all right" if the lessons failed, but that we would learn from that experience as well as a "perfect" lesson… I was very purposeful about organizing the lesson planning around content they were going to be covering, and incorporating their expertise into choosing texts they believed would be best to use in their classroom.

Marcie was reflective in noting the teacher leadership work she has performed, from guiding the work through her reassurances, to purposeful planning.

While these three teacher leaders (Brenda, Ellen, and Marcie) came to see themselves as leaders through this work, other teacher leaders, like Callie, gained role clarity through her work. When she started in this role, as a novice teacher leader, she had little support or guidance, and

therefore struggled to see herself in the work, as she was unsure of what the work even entailed. It is hard to match your talents and skills onto a new job when you do not know what that job entails. Callie could not know whether or not she was doing the work correctly if she didn't even know what she was supposed to be doing. In the beginning, she was making it up as she went, which led to some confusion, and also divided Callie's time and energy as she lacked focus in her work. For Callie, the pursuit of action research became bound up in the pursuit of pinning down the role and scope of her work, and understanding just what a teacher leader does in her context.

Defining the Teacher Leadership Role:

Callie

Arriving at a clearer leadership identity was also linked to clarification of the working role itself—roles that were often ambiguous and ill-defined by organizational leaders. New to her facilitation role, Callie experienced doubt about what her new role entailed at the beginning of her action research process. Without clear direction or a well-defined role, Callie was in the position of determining the scope and focus of her own work. Action research provided a means for Callie to clarify her role. This work also provided a support as she moved from classroom teacher and peer to teacher leader and coach. Early on, she expressed confusion about the ambiguous nature of her work:

> This is my first time in this kind of position where I am doing work to support programs and staff *and* students. I get to work with several student groups throughout the day but also I get to meet with teachers a lot. I set my own job essentially… I just sent out surveys at the beginning of the year trying to see what teachers wanted.

She notes she had to "set" her own job, which meant developing her own schedule and agenda. Additionally, she had to investigate classroom teachers' needs in terms of ELL support.

Initially, Callie saw this work as dichotomous, as she went back and forth between whether the focus of her work should be to support teachers or students. Callie struggled to determine how to carry out her role. As part of this, she also was unclear on how to determine a focus for her action research and how to frame her research question or problem. About halfway through her research process, she described her confusion:

> I'm meeting with teachers about the student work and they are doing something based on that. I don't know how to frame that, what that is exactly. I know I couldn't do it without meeting with teachers and making sure that they are implementing different things. I don't know who is the focus exactly…Obviously we are using student work but it's like I'm having a hard time pinpointing [who I am studying].

The relationship she developed with her collaborating teacher through her action research played a vital part in clarifying her role as a collaborator in support of adult learning. As they worked together in Ms. Doyle's classroom, Callie began to see her impact on students through her collaboration with their teacher.

After completing her action research project, data showed that Callie's notion of her teacher-leadership role reflected a focus on promoting teacher learning and broader school change. Callie no longer viewed her work in terms of student support, but demonstrated an understanding of how to support teachers to improve their practice. After the project, she described her work at her school with confidence:

> I started with very little detail about the role and no specific job description. The role should be teacher support, student support, and program work. The job started with student support. The action research let me do more of the teacher support piece. As I learned more, I have been able to do more staff support, like

> applying a specific strategy across the whole school. At the beginning, I didn't know what I was supposed to do, but I ended up working directly with teachers.

As a result of her action research work, Callie reported that her ideas about teacher leadership shifted towards teacher, rather than student, outcomes. She gained clarity about her role and a concrete understanding of how to support teacher learning.

In this larger identity theme, the action research lent itself to the exploration of what a teacher leader is and does. Leadership skills were built, a focus and reflective practice on the nature of leadership in the role was considered, and these participants were able to step into these roles, exercise leadership, and become leaders—leadership became part of their identity in these roles.

In addition to the self-exploration of identity building as a leader, action research was a catalyst for changing ways of working. Shifts in practice is another theme that emerged as teacher leaders came to work with others in new and different ways. The persistence in these practices and the ongoing mentored support through the process of action research prompted the reflective practice.

From Peer to Coach and Facilitator:
Marcie, Ellen, and Brenda

The experience of action research affected the participants' identities in one additional way, by shifting what it means to work *collaboratively* with others. At first, these teacher leaders saw themselves working as peers—that is, equal partners with the colleagues who were participating in their action research projects; over time, they took on coaching practices and worked with teachers in new ways as they tackled their action research and the problems of practice they were investigating. While still collaborating, their part of the partnership shifted in

noticeable ways. They began their research processes with ideas about the kinds of impacts they hoped to see as a result of their collaborative work with teachers. Through their action research projects, they gained a more nuanced understanding of how to approach the work, and come alongside teachers to work as a coach. While their experiences were very different, action research prompted them to shift their relationships with teachers from a *peer* towards a *coach/facilitator* identity, which involved integrating practices that facilitated the learning of all the collaborators, themselves included.

Early on, before these teacher leaders had taken their action research work very far, they saw themselves simply as colleagues of the teacher(s) they worked with, someone who operated as a "researcher" in the purest sense, another pair of eyes and ears to help the teacher in question gather data about a problem of practice. For example, Marcie noted:

> I wanted to do something different than just my own tiny little PLC because it was just a little bit too close. The science teachers I worked with … for a while, I was science and English and I was part of the science PLC. I've taught with those teachers for quite a long time. I toyed around with doing history. I sat down and talked to my principal. We decided I should focus on one content and she thought whatever I wanted to do. I went and talked to the science teachers and they were willing to jump in and try some things with me.

Marcie saw herself as "part of the science PLC," essentially, a peer as she "taught with those teachers for quite a long time." She did not yet see herself as a leader; she still saw herself as a peer. At this point, she didn't yet see her impact or role as a leader. Similarly, Brenda approached her teacher counterpart as a peer. Early on, as noted previously, she said:

> The first piece that I really want to learn about is probably alongside Isabel. I want to learn more about specifically, I think about Spanish language development because I don't know, is it different than English language development, especially orally. Is it different or is there a different process? I don't know. That's one thing I'm interested in learning.

Brenda experienced an internal struggle, that internal discord that Smylie and Denny (1990) refer to, in trying to temper her impulses to fix things or determine where to go and instead, to let the teacher be the guide and figure out where they want to go. In effect, in each case, they had owned the "researcher" part of the action research cycle, but had not yet considered or taken on the implications of the "action" part. Nor had they come to understand in a deeper sense what the sources of the problem of practice were, and how these sources could be addressed. The task of conducting an action research project would take them much farther in that direction.

As these teacher leaders delved further into the work and started to conceptualize their research problems, they saw the need to work in different ways with the collaborating teachers. This marks a shift in their thinking and leadership development as they worked towards developing their teacher leadership practice. For example, Brenda started to see her part as a leader in facilitating this work. Brenda noted:

> The other piece I'm interested in is really how I'm supporting this teacher to do her own learning. I didn't realize I was interested in this. Now I am. I have to do some research on coaching and see how I can coach her.

In order to effectively work with other teachers, as a leader, these teacher leaders had to set up a process to work with teachers, to determine what their needs were, how to best address these needs, and to make decisions about instructional practice. For Brenda, this meant discovering new ways of working and taking on a coaching role.

Brenda first approached this problem of practice, as seen in her initial research questions: "How can I support a dual language teacher to: Learn about oral language development in Spanish? Encourage native English speakers in a third grade classroom to use academic Spanish in the classroom?" She viewed this work as an academic problem, focusing on language

development. Initially, she said that she wanted to learn alongside Isabel, and did not recognize her own learning and development that were possible through the process of taking on this action research project. Over time, this work shifted, and Brenda was already starting to recognize and see that shift in her role here, as she noted that she had to "see how I can coach her" and learn how to work with Isabel in new ways. As she progressed in her learning and her action research, Brenda started to see her role as a learner as important in the process. In a meeting with her research advisor, tension emerged as her advisor encouraged Brenda to explore her emerging insights into her own learning:

Advisor:	The point you made about teacher ownership is so important so that you can see yourself more as facilitating a teacher's process based on a teacher- identified problem at practice, not your identified problem at practice.
Brenda:	When I started, my intention was that I would write about how we got kids talking in the classroom, and [my colleague] kept saying, "But what's happening with you and this teacher?" I kept going, "I don't know."
Advisor:	It's actually a really important part. The thing you have to remember--there's not that much in the literature that guides people in your kind of positions, so any kind of insights that you, as a leader, can give to the rest of the world through this action research project is really pretty significant.
Brenda:	Because this is really more of my story.

Through this conversation, Brenda started to value and see the significance of learning how to be a facilitator of her own and others' learning, noting that it is really more of her own story. Through her mentored action research and her engagement in this work, the structure and support for her learning existed. As Brenda participated in this coaching conversation with her advisor, she (her advisor) hones in on what Brenda is learning and how Brenda is growing through the work that she is doing. In this conversation, Brenda's advisor is validating the importance of Brenda's role and work and growth. We see Brenda shift from Isabel's growth to

a focus on her own story as she begins to see and consider the changes that are occurring in herself (Brenda) through this work.

Because of her action research work, Brenda's teacher leadership evolved as she worked with others in new ways in a new space, establishing her relationship with Isabel as she worked with her as a coach to help identify and address a problem of practice. Initially, Brenda was unsure of how to do this work and she felt most comfortable working with Isabel as her peer. Through her action research, Brenda began to learn more about and develop her skills as a coach. Action research allowed Brenda to coach Isabel; to ask her questions and to guide her thinking to help Isabel see other possibilities in her teaching and her students' learning. In our final interview, Brenda noted:

> In terms of my role and my learning about my teacher leadership work, it was nice to come in as a fellow learner, with a different lens. Not to prescribe things or know all the answers, but to problem solve and learn together, and be that sounding board for Isabel and help shape her classroom instruction and ideas.

Because of her action research project, Brenda was able to enter into a coaching cycle with Isabel that included classroom observations, meeting time with Isabel where they examined data together and Brenda engaged Isabel in coaching conversations, and continual communication and follow-up where Brenda visited and revisited Isabel's classroom to see the agreed upon work and changes in progress. Reflecting on her work, Brenda noted:

> The…important aspect of this research was the coaching relationship between Isabel and me. It was because of our professional connection that we were able to successfully get more kids talking and the literature about peer coaching and teacher leadership helped me to define what happened during our work together.

Brenda's conception of her role shifted as she observed herself learning and changing through her collaborative work, as she came alongside Isabel and acted as a partner, as a peer, and as a learner, shifting and changing her teacher leadership practices and the ways in which she was carrying out her role.

Marcie went through a similar transition in her conception of her relation to the teacher colleagues with whom she worked. Initially, she said:

> As a teacher leader, my goal was to help facilitate content teachers in increasing their skill in implementing literacy strategies in their classroom. This will provide support for students in increasing their comprehension skills, but also their ability to access the content of the course they are studying.

She saw herself as a facilitator, but did not see the deeper impact of the work beyond this single intervention. As her action research came to fruition, she started to see broader impact, both on her school and on herself. She noted, "I hoped to support a culture of collaboration that would continue in our professional learning communities. Another goal is that the planning, preparation and facilitation of these activities would further develop my own instructional leadership skills." Through reflection on her action research processes, she came to see this work as a means to guide her own professional growth and development.

While Marcie drew upon her strong relationships, others, like Ellen, struggled with the relational aspect of the work. While Marcie had the benefit of being well-established within the school, and a long-time staff member, Ellen was new(er) to both the building and her role, causing some unforeseen challenges. Ellen found ways to shape those challenges into learning opportunities, which in turn further helped her define herself in this new space and place. Ultimately, she drew her action research questions and work from this problem of practice.

Ellen was dissatisfied with the level of collaboration she saw among teachers at her school site, so she looked forward to using her teacher-leadership skills to improve communication and collaboration among her school's leadership team. She began her action research intervention by introducing communication strategies in leadership team meetings, but was initially frustrated by the lack of enthusiasm from staff. She observed that teachers did not seem to appreciate her efforts. She noted:

> Based on what they said, it seems like they are focused on looking for connections to their classroom work and they don't prioritize collaboration. I have gotten feedback that my questions aren't that useful for them and I get the feeling that people don't appreciate the kind of questions I asked today.

Hearing negative feedback from the teachers, Ellen concluded that teachers' lack of enthusiasm came from not seeing the importance of collaboration to their practice.

As she continued to present communication and collaboration strategies, and reflect on her research findings, Ellen began to question her approach. She continued to experience frustration at the teachers' resistance to her work. In the context of her action research work, she was prompted to reflect on her feelings of frustration, leading her to reconsider how her stance might be getting in the way of her goals. In her work, reflecting on another meeting that had not gone as planned, where teachers were not responding well to her methods, she said, "I am getting the feeling that I am asking too many questions. I need to withhold judgment and ask questions in a more open-ended way. I guess that is what a coaching role is supposed to be about." This quote shows that Ellen was considering a new approach to try to build more productive relationships.

Through an interview with a colleague that she conducted as part of her action research, Ellen's initial hunches and initial suspicions were confirmed. After hearing her colleague's

perception of the team's communication (or lack thereof) and of Ellen's role in leading the group, Ellen reflected, "I know that I have an impulse to put difficult topics on the table. But I am seeing the need to be more careful about how I discuss difficult ideas." Through these disaffirming experiences with teachers in the course of her action research, Ellen noticed the gap between her own conception of herself, her goals, and her ways of working, and how her methods were perceived by her teacher colleagues.

Through the process of analyzing her data on her action research topic, Ellen came to see that her desire to improve communication between staff members encountered resistance because it was imposed from the outside. She did not have working relationships established with teachers and staff at her school, as it was a new assignment. She was also imposing her own solutions and views on others' problems, rather than facilitating their thinking, learning, and problem solving. After reflecting on data gathered on her action research intervention, Ellen no longer faulted teachers for their lack of engagement. She commented:

> When I say that I think, "I know this, of course!," but the interventions really have to emerge from a group and that was part of the problem. They didn't see it as a problem and therefore, they were going through the motions to help me out. If the group identified something that we wanted to work on and I gave them choices as to how could we do this [it might work better]. I was so focused on "I have this project and I have to do this thing and it's going to be so great," that I didn't think about letting it grow from within.

Ellen acknowledged that her teacher leadership work, in this case (the interventions she was attempting) reflected her own goals, rather than the teachers' interests. This shows a shift in her ideas about what it meant to be a teacher leader, as she learned to come alongside these teachers, and listen to their voices–she let the ownership of the work be theirs, by letting it grow from within and allowing the group to identify the problem and what they want to work on. She

shifted her practices to consider how she might empower teachers and work to facilitate their learning.

As a result of their action research work, Ellen, Brenda, and Marcie all experienced a change in the way they approached their work; they shifted their focus and how they saw themselves in these roles. This work impacted their identities as teacher leaders, as they learned to work collaboratively with others in new and different ways, shifting their focus from seeing themselves as equal partners to taking on coaching practices and seeing their partnerships with others in a new light. In the preceding section, I explored my findings in terms of changing identities of teacher leaders through their action research work. Another element of teacher leadership, which I will turn to next, is how the work is carried out. In the next section, I focus my findings on how teachers develop these leadership practices, and how this work is different than the work they are accustomed to doing as classroom teachers.

Developing Teacher Leadership Practices

Teacher leaders perform a wide range of duties, from classroom teaching to managerial and administrative tasks (Little, 2003; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). According to York-Barr and Duke (2004), "Teacher leadership is an umbrella term that includes a wide variety of work at multiple levels in educational systems, including work with students, colleagues, administrators, and work that is focused on instructional, professional, and organizational development" (p. 288). The variety of work requires teacher leaders to develop new practices and new relationships, as in the case of Brenda and Marcie. The action research process provided an opportunity for teacher leaders in this study to critically examine their current practices and to develop systematic processes for engaging in teacher leadership work. Marcie, Brenda and Callie

all developed skills and systems for working with individual teachers at the classroom level. Karen's research helped her refine her school-level work. Rose's project focused on building collaborative systems at the district office, transforming both her own leadership practice and district-level professional development structures.

Developing New Relationships for Teacher Leadership Work:
Brenda and Marcie

The practice of teacher leadership creates a new space for teacher leaders to work with teachers, allowing for the development of a different relationship between the teacher and the teacher leader through action research, as they focus together on specific problems of practice to work through these problems and come up with new and different ways of improving their instructional practice.

A critical component of this new space is the relationship(s) built and the negotiation and renegotiation of those relationships between the teacher leader and those they are working with and leading. Teacher leadership offers a unique opportunity to work with someone who is an insider, someone who knows about teaching and best practices, and whose interest is in helping one to improve one's own practice as a teacher. Teacher leadership, coupled with action research as a driver for this collaborative work, provided Brenda with an impetus to build on her relationship with Isabel, to delve deeper and persist in her work. Near the end of her action research work, Brenda noted:

> For me, there are implications for my practice in learning more about and getting experience in how to coach one-on-one, as this was really my first experience with long-term coaching. Previously, it was just like come in, talk a little bit, and then maybe observe, and that was it. This was more in depth and focused, but it was also a lot more time and labor intensive.

Brenda noted persistence in her relationships, and new ways of working as a teacher leader that grew out of her relationships.

Other relationships that teachers enter into do not have the levels of support and vested interest that this one does. The relationship that teachers have with administration is often polarized by the evaluative nature of the work. Teachers collaborate and work with other teachers, their true peers, yet there are many factors and constraints on those relationships, such as time and self-interest. This unique relationship between a teacher and a coach provides support that is non-evaluative and confidential.

As a part of her action research, Brenda considered relationship building in new ways as it provided entry to classrooms for her leadership work. She noted that this was an important part of her role and work. In her final interview, she said:

> I felt that there was a lot of trust needed; there was me being trusted, and trusting in the teacher. As well that they would and could carry out these plans and do this and be successful in changing instruction and making an impact in their classroom.

Brenda reflected on her work, noting that prior to engaging in action research, there was little impetus to persist in this challenging work of building relationships. In the past, she would drop in, do a little work, and try on different roles. With this action research work, Brenda noted a change in her persistence and stick-to-itiveness, where she was compelled by the action research work to continue to build her relationship with Isabel, through ongoing and consistent communication, classroom visits, and coaching sessions. Brenda's action research work created a long-range plan and way of working with Isabel, rather than a single intervention, which was often how Brenda had worked before.

Part of the way that Brenda was able to develop this depth of understanding with Isabel was by her persistence and her ongoing work in Isabel's classroom with her students. Brenda provided another set of eyes for Isabel, to collect data during observations and hold that up as a mirror to shine light into Isabel's practice. Brenda's work was non-evaluative, and it demonstrated her interest in Isabel's work, her passion for the dual language program, and her investment in Isabel's students and their classroom community and learning. An example of this is seen in a coaching conversation referenced earlier, excerpted as follows:

Brenda:	The first thing I thought we'd talk about is what kind of trends we notice in the data, what do we see?
Isabel:	That all of the non-academic conversation that is going on still in English in the classroom.
Brenda:	Yeah and … "What did you write here, Angie?" [Angie is a student in Isabel's class]
Isabel:	Angie.
Brenda:	When I asked her that day I asked her in Spanish, I said do you ever talk to your partner in Spanish? She said no. I said well why not, you're talking to me in Spanish. She said, "Oh." I was like interesting.

Brenda built on her relationships with both the cooperating teacher, Isabel, and with students, as she mentioned specific students and their behaviors by name, citing Angie's participation. Brenda used her relationships to go deeper in her work.

Marcie also cited relationships as a critical component of her teacher leadership work. Thinking back on her project, she said, "I am lucky that I was able to do this in my building, and with a department that I already work with and know, that I have those relationships and that trust already developed." Marcie also focused on how the team of teachers she worked with had to trust each other: "The teachers who participated in this intervention placed absolute trust in each other and in my leadership of this study. They trusted each other personally and

professionally and were willing to try something new in their classrooms." Trusting relationships helped both Marcie and Brenda to push the teachers whom they were guiding in their interventions.

Using Data and Inquiry for Classroom-Level Teacher Leadership: Callie, Brenda, and Marcie

Another shift in practice that teacher leaders take on is learning *how* to use gather and data to inform their work with their colleagues and peers. Through action research and the mentored support these participants received, they became adept at identifying problems of practice to inquire into. Part of this inquiry involved using data to capture points in time and to examine how systems and processes were functioning. Through gathering data, these teacher leaders were able to show evidence and create a third point to discuss practice. This provided a springboard to discuss other approaches and new ways of working. By putting emphasis on inquiring into practice, developing data about problems and attempted interventions, and learning systematically from them, the action research experience pushed the teacher leaders to develop new and stronger practices featuring work with data and inquiry. The work that Callie performed with a classroom teacher for her action research helped her develop a systematic approach to teacher collaboration. As a novice teacher-leader, Callie was able to transfer the idea of a cyclical inquiry process to a model for collaborating with teachers.

Callie began the school year without a clear process for working with teachers. While she had some ideas about starting points, such as looking at data from oral language assessments or focusing on particular reading strategies, Callie had little knowledge about how to proceed towards meaningful goals. She described her approach at the beginning of the year, saying:

> That was sort of how it started: just asking the different grade level teams like, "Hey, what do you want?" They wanted to have a list with all their ELL kids and their levels. And then once new students started coming, teachers were like, "I have like this brand new level one student in sixth grade!"

Callie started in a reactive mode around "what teachers wanted." She was responsive to teachers' present (often changing) concerns, rather than focused on how to support teacher learning related to an observed or collaboratively-identified area of need.

As Callie proceeded into her action research and began to work more closely with her collaborating teacher, she noticed their work together developing direction and purpose. While their work began in a somewhat scattered fashion, the organizational systems that Callie developed for her action research helped her see patterns and begin to systematize their collaboration. In the following vignette, Callie describes her action research process to a colleague during a class meeting that took place midway through the year:

Callie:	We started out with student oral language and talked about goals for the class. We had a discussion of different kinds of strategies we might want to implement. At our first meeting, we talked about the sentence frames and the ELD grammar matrix. And I have been helping with certain strategies or brainstorming about what we can do for informal assessment, formative and as we go along, formal and informal.
Classmate:	So, it sounds like you are doing some coaching.
Callie:	Yeah.
Classmate:	And a little co-planning? And also, you were looking at a little bit of data together? Or is that the next step?
Callie:	Yeah, we have started doing some of that. We looked at student work, written work. And that was after we had already looked at some of the oral assessments and looked at what we notice about what students can do and how we can build that into grammar teaching.

Through this conversation, Callie was able to have the specific teacher leadership practices she was engaging in named and explored. She started to see the roles of a coach and the cycle she was using to guide the teacher's learning. Naming these teacher leadership practices helped to give validity to and concretize the work. This happened through the mentored support she received as she grappled with her problem of practice and her role as a teacher leader in her action research work. Callie developed a system to track the conversations and the outcomes of her work with her collaborating teacher for her action research. As she looked over her work, she began to see a developing pattern of ongoing assessment, analysis, reflection, and planning. Rather than using assessment to meet the teacher's immediate concerns, Callie started to think of her work with the teacher as part of a longer-term partnership to learn about students and adapt instruction.

By the end of her action research, Callie viewed her teacher leadership work through the lens of *collaborative inquiry*. Through her data analysis and review of literature, Callie developed her understanding of the cyclical nature of her work and was able to name the elements of her process. In her action research paper, she wrote:

> Ms. Doyle volunteered to work with me to assess, reflect on, and embed findings from student data into her classroom instruction. We looked at student language samples and discussed how to provide specific models of language to use in student talk and writing. We worked to brainstorm lessons, set language objectives, implement instructional strategies, and incorporate language models that could be integrated into what Ms. Doyle was already teaching….Ms. Doyle and I often held a meeting to debrief after a classroom observation, which led to further investigation into what we learned. Our collaborative inquiry process was iterative in that we noticed patterns, which led us to new strategies and data collection based on those strategies.

In this excerpt, Callie articulates her awareness of the individual components of the collaborative process fitting together to support larger learning goals for students, Mrs. Doyle, and herself. She

acknowledged that the steps in their cycle were part of a larger process of working together to investigate student learning and design instruction. Callie attributed the systematized focus to the process imposed by the action research process. She reflected, "Because of the action research, I did things that I otherwise would not have done. This process forced me to collect data and think ahead to my next steps." In contrast to her approach to work at the beginning of the year, Callie grounded her methods in a larger process aimed at specific goals.

In addition to informing her work with Mrs. Doyle, Callie saw her collaborative inquiry process as a way to facilitate her work with teachers in the future. The process became more than just a tool to facilitate her action research; it was a new, systematic way of directing her teacher leadership work. She commented on using this process to guide further work: "I would be interested to do this type of data collection with other teachers. Other teachers are interested in this kind of collaboration. It sets up a teacher-directed relationship between the facilitator and others." Looking towards future work, she had a clear sense of a systematic way to collaborate that focused on long-term learning and shifting instructional practice.

Much like Callie's work, Brenda's action research project also provided the opportunity to try on new coaching practices and reflect on her developing skills that were based in the use of data and inquiry as a central tool in improvement work. Through her action research, Brenda came to see the process she developed with her collaborating teacher as a systematic coaching cycle. Brenda focused her action research on a new collaboration with Isabel, a Spanish-language classroom teacher, around a mutually recognized problem of practice. She described the genesis of her project:

> We have very clear data points showing us that our English speakers are not speaking in Spanish enough. It's a problem of practice that the teacher recognized and said, “This is really something that we have to take care of.”

With the focus of their work together identified, Brenda began to gather data that she suspected might be useful for Isabel through classroom observation. She described the process:

> Right now I'm collecting data… I did a T-chart of how many opportunities they had to talk and then what language were they speaking. I marked every time during the 10 minutes that I was in there. Then I was scripting some of the things that [students] said. I walked around and listened and wrote down how many times I heard English, how many times I heard kids speaking Spanish. There was one group sitting together using a lot of Spanish. Afterward when Isabel and I debriefed, I said, "What's going on with that group? How come that group has everybody speaking in Spanish?" She didn’t know. I was like, "Okay, let's figure it out because we want to replicate that." She and I have met three times now and talked a little bit about it.

Brenda knew that she would continue to work with Isabel, but she didn’t seem sure about exactly how to proceed after her initial data collection and analysis with the teacher.

As she moved forward with both her research and the collaboration with Isabel, Brenda began to see how her data collection and analysis could determine the direction of the work. Speaking with her research advisor, she described the developing process:

> We looked at that data before we planned the intervention and she said, “Oh, this is interesting information.” I also broke it down into one-on-one interactions, partner interactions, and whole group interactions so she could see that. That piece, I think, played a pretty big role in what we decided to do for intervention.

Brenda connected the knowledge that she and Isabel gained from the data to planning for classroom interventions. At this midway point, she started to understand that she was engaging in a systematic process of collaborating, using student data to inform classroom practices.

The process of engaging in action research helped Brenda get more familiar with data of various kinds—both how to generate it and how to interpret it, as well as bringing it to bear on questions of improving practice. Brenda became more adept at using data. In particular, she gathered data around student talk; Table 5 displays an excerpt of the charting system she tried out and eventually settled upon as a means to gather data. Through this process, this became the data she gathered and used to facilitate her coaching conversations with Isabel. As she persisted in her work on her project, she found herself quite comfortable taking observational field notes of the teacher and students in the classroom setting, whereas this did not come easily at first. She not only gathered and considered data in ways she had never done before, she began to visualize how it could be used and be useful to her, and to her teacher colleague to influence instruction and develop classroom interventions.

Table 5. Brenda's Charting System

Type of Talk	Spanish	English
Asking the Teacher a Question	IIIII IIIII	
Chit Chat	I	IIIII IIIII IIIII III
Choral Response	IIIII	
Hands Raised	IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII IIIII I	II
Heads Together	IIIII III	I
Name Sticks	IIIII IIIII	
Partner	IIIII IIIII II	IIIII IIIII

Through her action research, Brenda became a participant observer in the process. Here is an example of how she used data in her coaching work, as she speaks to Isabel:

> Yeah, so I know you've been thinking about it and I've been thinking about it. On this page I wrote just some guiding questions that might help us talk through what we want to do and where we want to start. I have ideas but you are the

> teacher so you have ideas too. The first thing I thought we'd talk about is what kind of trends we notice in the data; what do we see?

Brenda used data to guide her work and plan her coaching conversation with Isabel. She shared the ownership for the work while working one on one with Isabel, in this coaching conversation, looking at and using data. This marks a new and different way of thinking, born out of her action research process, as she worked to facilitate the conversation and guide Isabel's learning.

In her final action research paper, Brenda noted that "Using the observation data, we designed a lesson that we hoped would address both the problems of students talking mostly in English, and of teaching students how to talk to each other." She came to see how the data can inform instructional interventions to be applied to action research problems. In her final interview, she said, "Using an inquiry cycle, we developed a talk protocol and lesson format to increase the quality and quantity of talk in the classroom." Because Brenda is working through this job embedded professional development work of action research, there is time and space allotted for her to observe Isabel's classroom, gather data as she observes, confer with Isabel and share her data, and work together to come up with new plans and solutions to this problem of practice. This data gathering, analysis, and use is a practice Brenda developed as she worked through the action research inquiry cycle and process.

At the conclusion of her action research experience, Brenda articulated new awareness of the process that she engaged in around Isabel's problem of practice—a process that had become clear to her through a data-based cycle of improvement work. She contrasted her experience with Isabel to her past work, noting how much she learned about coaching:

> For me, there are implications for my practice in learning more about and getting experience in how to coach one-on-one, as this was really my first experience with long-term coaching. Previously, it was just like come in, talk a little bit, and

> then maybe observe, and that was it. This was more in depth and focused, but it was also a lot more time and labor intensive.

Action research prompted Brenda's recognition of systematic ways to approach classroom problems of practice. She affirmed that the use of coaching cycles (collecting and analyzing data, defining a focus, implementing a practice, reflecting on implementation) worked for her and would be incorporated into her work to use with other teachers.

In a different but complementary way, Marcie came to adopt more of an inquiry stance through her action research work. In reflecting on her project, she noted:

> I will think more about why? And take the time to think about the problem differently and know that I can gather some data and look at it differently. I think it just changes how I approach everything, to think about why more, and ask those questions and look at or approach problems and situations differently.

Marcie linked her inquiry stance that she developed through action research to teacher leader practices like gathering and using data:

> I think I have more of an inquiry as stance—you know, we read that book—so to me, I just have a different eye and in the future, I will take time and collect more information rather than feel pressed for time and just make a quick, on the spot decision. I will think more about why? And take the time to think about the problem differently and know that I can gather some data and look at it differently.

Her decision making process shifted, and she saw the value in having more information (data) as objective evidence to navigate future problems of practice.

The focus on data and inquiry became an important element in Callie, Brenda, and Melanie's action research work as a partnership and collaboration with their cooperating teachers. The use of data collection was a common tool of teacher leadership, and was a new

way of working for Brenda and Callie (CSTP's, 2009, "Teacher Leadership Framwork" ; Leading Educators', 2014, "Teacher Leader Competency Framework"; TLEC's, 2011, "Teacher Leader Model Standards"). The data provided evidence of practice and, over time, evidence of change, as it was first a launching point for conversations around practice and considerations of ways to shift teaching practices. Brenda and Callie used data as coaches, letting the data speak for itself, and facilitating conversations around the data and what it was showing teachers about their work. Melanie, Brenda and Callie identified that the use of data was an important tool of teacher leadership, and something that they would use again, in the future, to continue to guide their work. They all took on a collaborative inquiry process through the data, defining for them their teacher leadership work and a way to approach their work.

In addition to classroom level interventions and practices based on data collection and use, data can inform decision-making at other levels, as well. In Rose and Karen's action research processes, the collection of data as a practice helped to shed light on larger school and systems inequities, which they were then able to address through this work. As teacher leaders, this use of data as a tool provided evidence which led to changes on a broader level.

Developing Systematic Approaches to Teacher Leadership

Whatever the effects on the teacher leader's own practices and identity as a leader, the engagement of these individuals in leadership work based in action research also had apparent influences on the approach to teacher leadership at both school and district levels. Here, the patterns were most apparent in the case of Karen and Rose, both experienced teacher leaders, for whom the new discoveries about identity and an initial set of leadership practices were less

evident. In many ways, they were ideally positioned to gain a better sense through their action research work of how to exert school and/or district-wide systematic leadership influence.

Systematic Approaches to School-Level Teacher Leadership:

Karen

As a teacher leader, Karen's work involved facilitating instructional changes school-wide. Karen worked as a teacher leader assigned to implement a federal grant; as such, Karen's work included supporting teachers to restructure their classrooms around project-based learning. An important element of this teacher leadership work involved getting teachers, students, and the school to connect with and use experts from the community. At the outset of her action research, Karen had been a teacher leader for over 17 years. As a long-time teacher leader, Karen had significant experience using many previously employed practices to facilitate collaboration and develop learning opportunities for other teachers. Through her action research, Karen developed specific tools to make her school-level work with teachers more effective and systematic.

Karen hoped to develop tools to help teachers work more successfully with content-area experts from the community. Through her action research, Karen tried out new approaches, evaluated their success, and worked for improvement. As Karen embarked on her work in this new role, one strategy she used was to create a database to store and share contact information of local experts. Karen created this shared tool with the hope that teachers would add names to the list and consult the database to bring experts into their classrooms. Karen introduced the database at the beginning of the year as she began her research (fall of 2012). Midway through the year, Karen noticed that her tool was not working as she had hoped. She wrote:

> I have learned that the methods used to get teachers to add names of experts were not very successful. I was also hoping the expertise database would be a useful

> tool. I did end up with 50 experts listed but only after teachers were reminded and given specific time to add names to the list… This knowledge is causing me to think of a new approach.

Karen reflected on this work as part of her action research, which led her to rethink her creation and use of this tool, the database. She developed a plan to gather more information from teacher teams about how to make this tool (the expert database) more useful. Ultimately, the data that Karen collected led her to alter *how* teachers used the tool. At the conclusion of her project, she commented, "We decided to document the expertise for the grant, but we decided departments should keep the contact information for individuals. This policy shifted as a result of my research." As this quote demonstrates, as Karen collected and analyzed action research data, she was able to take a critical look at how she was working with teachers. Karen's action research process highlighted a problem in her own practice, which also extended to the ways in which she supported teachers in this work. She investigated this problem of leadership practice through a cyclical and iterative process, which led her to eventually refine the tools she used in her leadership work.

The data collection strategies that Karen developed through her action research also helped her build new practices around using ongoing assessment of staff needs to guide her work with teachers. Karen began her action research project with an intervention in the form of a summer professional development session about using outside experts in the classroom. At the conclusion of this summer session, Karen asked teachers to complete an online survey that would allow her to assess their needs and support their use of experts for problem-based learning in their classrooms. Karen was able to use this survey as an assessment tool so that she could systematically follow up with individual teachers over the course of the school year. At the conclusion of her project, Karen spoke confidently about the improvements in staff members'

use of experts, based on the success of her intervention and follow-up. She also described the need for continuing assessment of the learning of the adults in the school. She said:

> Every staff meeting, we set aside time for teachers to ask others about the kind of experts they need for their upcoming units. I was pushing for this, but now lots of people are asking for this. Our culture around expertise has changed. We have a few new people next year as others are leaving. I want to check in and make sure new staff are on board with these expectations.

By the conclusion of her action research, Karen was finding ways to capitalize on opportunities, such as staff meetings, as a means to regularly assess teachers' needs and practices, and as a tool to promote continued staff learning.

While Karen's case represents the use of systematic inquiry, tools, and data to drive decision making at a whole-school level, Rose's action research extends beyond an individual classroom, teacher, or school to focus on a broader systems impact. Across these cases, these teacher leaders developed their practices in using inquiry through the use of data and tools, as a result of their action research. What emerged as important was the use of data to guide collaborative inquiry, whether into individuals' classroom practices, building level practices, or district level systems. In what follows, I explore the work that Rose did at a larger district level as she collaboratively inquired into practices and systems, working alongside another teacher-leader peer.

Systematic Approaches to District-Level Teacher Leadership: Rose

The discoveries about how to make teacher leadership work more systematic and far-reaching were just as applicable for teacher leaders home-based in the district central office. Rose's action research project reflected her interest in exploring issues and practices that impacted her work as an experienced teacher leader (with over 8 years of experience when she

started her action research project, in 2012) based at the school district central office. In her eighth year (2012) as an ELL specialist in a central office role, Rose began her action research process with a clear understanding of her position within the formal and informal structures of the district. She used her action research to develop more systematic ways for working across departments within the central office (the ELL and Literacy departments), and ultimately prompted district organizational change as a result of her action research inquiry work and presentation of her ideas to leadership at the district level.

Rose's action research grew from her dissatisfaction with the ways that her position within the district support structure inhibited and limited the powerful work that she was attempting to carry out in schools. She noted that the district's system required schools to purchase specific packages of time and support from district-based literacy or math specialists. As an ELL facilitator, Rose was assigned to a number of elementary schools without any agreement with each school as to how her time and support would be used. She commented:

> The benefit of the literacy and math structured support model is that schools pay for it, so they have to work with the specialists. Nobody has to work with me. There are schools where I do nothing, because nobody organizes it with me.

This structure limited Rose's access to certain schools and constrained her ability to develop meaningful relationships with some schools.

A developing collaboration with one literacy specialist colleague, Melissa, gave Rose the opportunity to expand her reach, while still using the district's existing support structures. Describing her project, Rose noted that collaboration among district-specialists was itself an innovation:

> It started out that I was just going to work with her at one grade level at one school where she's providing structured support. This came about partly as a result of the support team structure at that school. Then it kind of expanded. Our work spread to include other schools just because we started this relationship, and now we talk more.

By increasing her level of communication with her colleague, Rose was able to gain access to teachers at schools where she had not previously worked.

As her project progressed, the partnership allowed Rose to experiment with methods of collaboration to enhance the work both she and the literacy specialist were doing.

> We planned together. We talked about what we had seen [in a particular classroom]. We've actually provided professional development that looked different. It was co-taught, with one of us teaching, and one of us coaching. We facilitated meetings. We created or shared back and forth tools and resources.

Rose noted that both specialists were able to learn from the practices of the other and began to integrate their content and support to provide more powerful learning experiences for teachers. Rose commented on the benefits of the partnership:

> I'm learning a lot about literacy and I think—I hope—that she's learning a lot about ELL. We're figuring out ways to integrate it all, to try to help people to integrate language development into literacy instruction, which is a natural fit.

This collaboration resulted in an increased availability in resources for teachers, and also helped the specialists (ELL and Literacy, in this case) build specific content knowledge and collaboration and leadership skills, as they were able to co-create, co-facilitate, and co-present professional development, increasing the number of supports and services available to teachers and staffs.

In addition to learning about literacy content and increasing her access to schools, her action research provided Rose with new ideas and new models to consider and implement regarding ways to structure district-wide systems of support. In her final paper, Rose proposed a new system to merge the roles of the district-based specialists and to incorporate collaboration to benefit the learning and services of both the specialists and the teachers that they work with. She described the proposal generated by her research findings:

> The implications were a proposal to merge the literacy and ELL departments into one department of language and literacy, and that would have the best of both worlds. The way I laid it out was ideal, but we're taking baby steps to get there. The idea would be that we're all language specialists, we're dually endorsed specialists for instructional support and we could all deliver what the school wanted for specific professional development. So, the support would include more ELL specific content and it would include being much more explicit systematically about integrating literacy with ELL. And also, the components of the literacy specialist positions would have to change. There would have to be some combined funding… I would like to see, instead of just having specialists out doing PD alone, increased collaboration.

Her conclusions were embraced by the district directors of both the ELL and literacy departments and influenced formal structural changes, such as role descriptions used for hiring new specialists, joint professional development opportunities for specialists, and intentional pairing of specialists at individual schools.

Through her action research, Rose (and truly, all of the teacher leaders in this study) approached a peer-colleague and proposed an intervention. These teacher leaders all inquired into problems of practice. Through their investigation into problems of practie, they learned to work in different way. While for some of them it was the use of tools and for others it was the use data, all of them used collaborative inquiry to promote a change.

Cross-Case Findings Summary

Across many of these cases, the theme of relationships is seen as a foundational element in exercising teacher leadership. Donaldson (2008) notes that leaders accomplish their work in relationships with others, and that those relationships matter greatly to their success. This was the case with the teacher leadership work that was enacted through action research, as well, particularly in the cases of Marcie, Brenda, and Rose. Their relationships with their peers both provided access and allowed for collaboration and new ways of thinking and learning together. Alternatively, Ellen's work highlights the challenges teacher leaders face when they do not have clearly established roles or relationships; as Ellen became more self-aware and developed her teacher leader identity and ways of working as she soon realized that what she was doing was not working effectively. In the absence of relationships, as was the case with Ellen, an even greater need for teacher leadership practices that guide or facilitate the work of others is critical to move practice forward.

Leadership learning is facilitated by having a plan or design for learning (Donaldson, 2008). In this study, the plan was created and carried out through action research, often through collaborative inquiry (as with Brenda and Callie). The careful planning and requisite work required of action research provided for rich leadership learning opportunities, afforded through this mentored action research. Wenger (1999) notes that learning happens whether it's designed or not, as it belongs to the realm of experience and practice; and yet there are few more urgent tasks than to design social infrastructures that foster more effective learning. In these findings, participants developed their teacher leader identity largely through self-reflection and in collaboration or interactions with others. The developed their identities as they became teacher leaders, defining the teacher leadership role, and moving from peer to coach and facilitator.

These themes are highlighted in the cases of Brenda, Callie and Ellen in particular; as they saw their own growth and identity development as facilitators of adult learning while they took on coaching practices as a concept worthy of investigation and exploration. They saw themselves and their impact in this work as they developed their teacher leader identities.

Designers of preparation programs for educational leaders have sought increasingly to bridge the "theory to practice" gap, recognizing that conventional campus-based methodologies limit learning to cognitive modes (McDonald, Kazemi, & Schneider-Kavanagh, 2013; Norris, Barnett, Basom, & Yerkes, 2002; Spillane & Camburn, 2006). Donaldson (2008) argues for taking the learner to where the learning is: in the performance of real leadership, in real schools, immersed in the relationships that make or break leadership. Improved leadership knowledge and skills don't automatically produce improved leadership practice (Spillane & Camburn, 2006). The knowledge of practices or theory around leadership, as gained through the MIL and Ridgetop programs, is not enough. Knowledge alone does not account for individuals exercising leadership and their actions as leaders; this is gained only through practice and enacting actual leadership, on the job and in real life work. Through their action research processes, they were provided with a forum for reflecting on this leadership in action, and were able to consider their growth, development, and skills through coaching by an advisor. As seen in the cases of Brenda and Callie, they developed teacher leadership practices through relationships and the use of data and inquiry. Through their on-the-job performance, coupled with their action research, they were able to see and examine their abilities to learn and lead; this occurred in the interpersonal realities of their relationships for Melanie, Brenda and Rose (Donaldson, 2008). Ellen experienced dissonance in her leadership work in the absence of relationships.

Additionally, the ability to learn and lead is seen in the realm of the cognitive grasp of knowledge (Donaldson, 2008) as we take on leadership roles. For the purposes of this study, this was seen in the changing ways that teacher leaders worked within systems to consider developing systematic approaches to teacher leadership at the school level and district level. Callie and Brenda experienced this change for the first time through their new teacher leadership roles, as they learned to develop systematic approaches to their teacher leadership. Donaldson (2008) also notes that in performance can we encounter ourselves authentically as leaders. In my findings, this was seen in Karen and Rose's cases, as they changed the ways that they worked within the school and district contexts. Even as experienced teacher leaders, they were able to encounter themselves and see new realities for their schools, systems, and personal work through this process.

CHAPTER 6.

Summary and Concluding Reflections

Researchers (Bullough, 2005; Zembylas cited in Bullough, 2005; Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006) have found that a teacher's professional identity is discontinuous, fragmented, and subject to turbulence and change. They also noted that teachers have an "uncertain being" with a "plurality of roles" characterized by fragmentation, discontinuities, tensions, and dilemmas. In an analogous way, the teacher leaders in this study experienced similar discontinuities, as they worked to navigate their new roles, roles for which their established identities as successful teachers had not prepared them. And they recognized that their initial identities as teacher leaders differed somewhat from the realities of their positions. Each in their own way, they faced major questions about their identity and capability in their new line of work. At the core of this study has been an investigation into the way emerging teacher leaders encounter and address these questions in a particular context for their learning: that of mentored action research, undertaken across the span of 1 year in one of several programs designed to guide their development as teacher leaders.

In what follows in this chapter, I summarize and reflect on what this study of teacher leaders' engagement in action research revealed regarding their learning about themselves, their practice, and their roles in relation to others. I then consider these findings in a larger theoretical perspective, while also considering alternative ways that the findings could be understood. Furthermore, I discuss what questions the study was unable to answer (or couldn't, given its design), and imagine some different kinds of research that would appropriately explore these matters. Finally, I note the main contributions of the study to scholarship and to the practical

work of developing a strong teacher leader corps, in the context of contemporary efforts to improve teaching and learning.

Learning through Leading Action Research:

The Main Findings

Given the numerous challenges to developing and maintaining teacher leadership described in the literature, this study considered the possibilities of action research for reinforcing the leadership identities and practices of teachers in their local contexts. As such, the study aimed to build understanding of how participation in action research can impact teachers' professional growth and development as leaders. The study was an attempt to respond to the fact that teacher leaders are often entrusted with facilitating teacher-learning (Taylor, 2008), and yet the learning processes of teacher leaders themselves have been largely unexplored (Michelson, 2013). The teacher leaders in this study asked leadership-focused questions in their local school or district contexts, collected data related to those questions, analyzed and reflected on the data, and took action based on their findings.

The teacher leaders on which this study focused had particular attributes that may set them apart from others, and consequently the findings must first be understood as an illumination of teacher leaders' learning in particular contexts. Unlike the majority of teacher leaders, the participants in this study had the unusual advantage of participating in action research within supported settings, either embedded in a university degree program or a district course/program completed in a supported setting as a requirement of their job as a teacher leader. Another atypical characteristic of the teacher leaders followed in this study is that all but one held a formalized role in her school or district. Action research had an equal impact on the learning of

the informal teacher leader, but this study is limited in that only one teacher leader acted informally, without a specific title, role, and funding. The study is also limited by its small sample size (*N*=6) and, like much of the research on teacher leadership, can make no claims about direct improvement on student achievement.

Findings from this study offer contributions to the current literature on teacher leadership and teacher leader learning. One contribution is an elaboration of the assertions in the literature concerning the problematic nature of teacher leadership. Interest in and research on teacher leadership has increased in recent years. Some studies have shown potential positive impacts of teacher leadership on student learning outcomes (Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010; Matsumura et al., 2010). Other research shows the persistently problematic nature of teacher leaders, especially in terms of lack of structure or role clarity, which this study, in part, speaks to, and also in terms of the complexity of the work (Firestone & Martinez, 2007; Little, 2003; Margolis & Doring, 2012; Scribner & Bradley-Levine, 2010; Smylie & Denny, 1990). This study highlights the ways in which teacher leaders took on these problems, such as role clarity and the complexity of their work, through action research. In taking on action research, some of these challenges of teacher leadership came to the forefront, and the knowledge, skills, and reflective practices gleaned through the process of their mentored action research seminars provided them the means to navigate these challenges.

Another contribution concerns how teacher leaders may learn particular practices associated with their roles. Little is known about how teacher leaders learn to lead, and how they learn to take on the challenges of teacher leadership, as mentioned above. We have much to learn about *how* teacher leaders learn to navigate the challenges they encounter. This study sheds light onto some of the particular practices learned, and demonstrates how this work was

carried out, contributing to the field and providing a guide for future and further learning around teacher leadership practices. Additionally, there is a set of contributions concerning the implications for those concerned with the development of teacher leaders.

First, let me offer an overarching finding that is abundantly clear from the analyses I presented in the preceding two chapters: participation in an extended, mentored action research experience had identifiable impacts on these teacher leaders' identities as leaders, on what they did in their new roles, and in their capacity to influence others' practice. More specifically, my research offers and supports four more specific claims—that the teachers leaders: (a) were able to better define their roles and the scope of their teacher leadership work through action research; (b) learned to lead others and improved their capacity to facilitate adult learning; (c) improved their leadership practice and generated professional knowledge, with specific skills derived from their inquiry work. A fourth finding concerns the support they received in this process: (d) learning to lead through action research was a mentored process that benefited from the supportive structure this process provided. I elaborate below on each of these claims.

The specific tasks and relationships that action research entailed *helped the teacher leaders better define their roles and the scope of their work.* For example, the reflection that Callie engaged in through her action research project helped her to *define* her teacher leadership role and reduce the ambiguity that she faced as a novice ELL facilitator. Callie had to articulate a focus for her study. The process of describing a problem of her own practice and developing a relevant research question, as well as the action and reflection phases of the project, led her to develop a clear sense of purpose for her work with one classroom teacher. In essence, the research project provided a test case for her; it gave a structure of planning, doing, and reflecting to working in a new and ambiguous role (Stringer, 2008). She reported that she could transfer her

developing sense of the role into her future work with teachers. Brenda and Marcie also reported that they could transfer their work from these cases to future work as teacher leaders. Action research also helped them to *define* their teacher leadership roles, and created structure(s) for the work. Ellen also experienced more role clarity in terms of ways of working and the development of teacher leader practices. She shifted her practice from problem-solving for others to facilitation of adult learning, wherein the adults she worked with were able to find and solve their own problems. She came in wanting to provide all of the answers, and through this process, she learned that leadership was not about having the answers; rather, it's often about asking the right questions. She learned this through action research. Ellen's action research work taught her to ask questions of her own practice.

Through their engagement in the relationships involved in action research, the teacher leaders *learned to lead others and improved their capacity to facilitate adult learning*. They came to see themselves as leaders, both understanding and accepting what that meant. Likewise, both Ellen and Brenda deepened their understanding of what it meant to *lead*, moving from thinking their job was to *fix* other professionals (to improve what others were doing) toward a view of themselves as facilitators of learning—both their own and that of others. I also saw evidence of internal conflict for Ellen and Brenda as they struggled to accept a *role shift* from teacher to leader. Ellen, for example, reported that the action research process forced her to persevere in relationships with teachers that no longer felt friendly or safe. The formal inquiry process provided a holding space (Drago-Severson, 2004) for her struggles as well as a structure for self-analysis and reflection. Ellen was able to reframe her relationship with classroom teachers as potentially collegial, if not always congenial. She shifted from being a friendly peer to being a leader among colleagues. This was true for Brenda as well, as she had to shift from

seeing herself as a peer to taking on more of a coaching role. Her relationship, and her view of self, changed as she learned to work differently with Isabel. Previously, Brenda struggled to see herself as a leader. Through interactions with university faculty and her peers that occurred through action research, Brenda reflected on her practice and came to see herself and her work in new ways.

Participation in action research *improved teachers' leadership practice and generated professional knowledge, with specific skills derived from their inquiry work.* While I began this study expecting to find that action research can help teacher leaders to improve their practice and generate professional knowledge (Noffke, 1997), I didn't predict how directly the systematic, data-driven inquiry processes would transfer to the work of teacher leadership for both novice and experienced practitioners. Even after more than 17 years of work as a teacher leader, Karen's action research process led her to develop specific tools and a data-based approach to supporting the learning of teachers at her school site. And for Rose, also a more veteran teacher leader, her action research led her to create systems-level changes related to delivery of services for improved instructional outcomes for teachers around ELL and literacy. This work was driven by the systematic, data-driven inquiry processes of action research.

For novice teacher-leaders, such as Callie and Brenda, the process mapped onto their new work around coaching and collaboration. They reported that the cyclical structure of the action research process supported their pre-planning, coaching, and debriefing work with teachers. Through data-collection and analysis processes, they reflected on their own learning and began to articulate steps for coaching teachers toward focused support for ELL students. Brenda and Ellen both developed new practices around data, using it to better understand teaching and learning practices, and communication. This helped to frame and define their teacher leadership

work; it showed evidence-based practices and a third point for analysis. A cyclical and systematic process of observation, data gathering, and analysis was born out of this work that defined their sense of teacher leadership.

Learning to lead through action research was *a mentored process that benefited from the supportive structure this process provided*. Action research supported the professional development of the teacher leaders who participated in my study, but this was not research conducted in a vacuum. The research was mentored by university faculty, carried out in the context of organizationally-supported coursework, and influenced by the respective communities of practice (Wenger, 1999). The teacher leaders worked on their projects under careful supervision in a collegial group of role-alike peers. These conditions added multiple dimensions to the experience. The courses and seminars provided mentored support for learning about action research. The teacher leaders conducted their studies in communities of practice that involved mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and the development of shared repertoire of professional knowledge (Wenger, 1999). In both settings, the teacher leaders articulated and presented their research results in a public forum. These organizational features enhanced and supported participants' individual learning and development (Gallucci et al., 2010).

Looking More Deeply at
What the Study Findings May Be Telling Us

Taking a sociocultural view of professional adults' learning as situated job-embedded professional development (Rogoff, 2003), these teacher leaders learned about their leadership identities, practice, and role relation with others, through guided participation in action research. Guided participation is a mutual process, with learners participating actively in their own

learning, at the same time that others attempt to guide their learning for them (Rogoff, 2003). This study provides insights into the factors that mediate teacher leader learning through problems of practice. These six teacher leaders' learning experiences, taken together, illustrate some trends in their learning processes through action research in the findings. Their learning through investigating problems of practice through their action research was mediated by an iterative combination of: (a) participation in the daily work of teacher leadership within their school and district settings; (b) engaging in the processes of action research with their cohort group, be it in the MIL or Ridgetop program setting; (c) mentored support for their action research through peer-sharing and coaching of the university faculty in both settings (MIL and Ridgetop); and (d) their own experiences and self-guided work toward completion of their action research projects. Rogoff (2003) explains that participants often have to adjust or "stretch" their understandings of "shared endeavors" while they participate. This was an outcome of their involvement in their cohort group and the mentored support they received. The participants came to find, understand, and handle particular teacher leadership challenges as they moved back and forth between daily experience and formal professional development.

This study offers teacher leadership research a promising lens for examining *what* and *how* teacher leaders learn from their daily problems of practice. Sociocultural learning theory is a useful lens for studying teacher leader learning since it assumes and draws attention to the situated nature of learning in particular contexts (Michelson, 2013). These teacher leaders did not address problems in a vacuum. They came to notice, understand, and handle particular problems through social interactions with other teachers in a setting with a particular set of goals and values; messages analyzed on the "community plane" (Rogoff, 1995) shaped what coaches perceived as problems of practice and helped them to determine how to best approach these

issues. Through their action research work, these teacher leaders came to approach their problems and see them in multi-faceted ways as they adopted an inquiry stance. They also came to use more data to inform their own practice and they came to notice how teachers used (or did not use) data in their own practices.

Apart from *what* the teacher leaders learned through participation in this action research process, the study sheds further light on *how* that learning takes place, and what the participants are actually doing and experiencing along the way. These teacher leaders entered the realm of mentored action research with a wide variety of different skills sets and expectations. Dinkelman, Margolis, & Sikkenga (2006a) found that as teachers moved into the role of teacher educators they were forced to deal with the emotional components in changing their roles from those of successful K-12 teachers, similar to the discomfort that new principals experience (Brown- Ferrigno, 2003). As in Dinkelman et al.'s study of the shift from teacher to teacher educator, these teacher leaders engaged in negotiations with others as they attempted to build on their teacher identities. Their previous teacher identities were not left behind; rather as they developed their new identities as action researchers and teacher leaders, they drew from their previous identities, adding additional roles and images of their professional work.

Dinkelman et al. (2006b) noted that identity formation involves a shifting of identities and argued that the process of shifting role identifications involved negotiation rather than displacement and that such negotiation often involved "dual citizenship," for which the leaders' teacher identity was important for their credibility to work with teachers. Dinkelman et al. noted, however, that it was a challenge to balance seemingly conflicting role responsibilities. In the study presented here, the teacher leaders also took on a kind of dual citizenship, and in doing so

they engaged in a delicate, emotionally laden process of negotiating with others about who they were, what they could do, and how it might be of help to others.

Elaborating a Conceptual Framework for Teacher Leadership Development Through Action Research

While the conceptual framework developed for this study (see Figure 1) does manage to capture much of the enactment of action research and the teacher leadership learning that may occur through this process, there are also elements of the findings that this conceptual framework does not speak to. The constraints of this conceptual framework include the fact that it does not highlight the specific processes of action research. It does not show the many varied and nuanced steps that are part of the action research process, such as the development of a research problem or problem of practice to inquire into. It does not identify how that process takes place; how the problem is seen, found, or selected. It also does not detail the development of research questions to frame the research problem, and the process of creating those questions for inquiry. This framework does not cover the methods for creating or identifying an intervention to use to further probe and inquire into the research problem, nor does it cover the implementation of the intervention. Data collection and analysis and the process of writing the research paper are also not included. The framework does not delve deeply into the participants' development of a disposition to inquire as participants simultaneously learned about the inquiry cycle—thus not capturing that intersection of research and practice. The framework also does not go into depth in addressing the relational aspects of the work.

The current conceptual framework could be elaborated upon to include relationships as a key piece of this work. Relationships are somewhat implied in the current iteration of this

conceptual framework, in the "engagement in collaborative inquiry;" yet while implied, relationships are not specifically mentioned, nor are they the focus of any aspect in the framework. Relationships may be part of the context, and therefore could be listed across the top bar, including "relationships" with the school and district context pieces. Relationships are contextual, and the existence of strong relationships helped to drive the work forward in many cases of action research completed by these participants (i.e., Brenda, Rose, Marcie). Additionally, the absence of relationships, as in the case of Ellen's work, a lack of relationships worked against her. As someone new to the school, new to the role, and also working half-time, not having these trusting relationships as a foundation worked against her. Ellen noted feelings of fear from the very staff members she was working to support, and an initial lack of understanding and fear of judgement initially on the part of those whom she was working to lead. Establishing relationships is difficult, challenging, and nebulous work, yet in many of these cases and in the findings, trusting relationships provided the necessary foundation to move the work forward. In rethinking the conceptual framework, I would consider how to better include and capture the importance of relationships in teacher leadership work.

The "engagement in collaborative inquiry" does serve as a driver for much of the teacher leadership work, as shown in the conceptual framework. If I were to tackle another version of this conceptual framework, I would likely add more to this piece, further and better defining collaborative inquiry and what that process entailed. In the findings, the interventions that these teacher leaders developed are mentioned, some in more detail (i.e., Brenda and Ellen and their data-collection systems/charts, see Tables 3 & 4) than others. It is the interventions that occur through the collaborative inquiry work that have the power to improve practice and drive this work. This is where teachers and teacher leaders work together, experiment, come up with new

and different ideas, and change their practices. This is the work that has the power to impact student outcomes; when teachers learn to shift their practice. The conceptual framework and even the findings do not sufficiently capture the impact of this work, yet—this is where the magic happens! Collaborative inquiry space is fuzzy, hard to define, and looks different in every case, per every individual teacher leader and their specific problem of practice and within their context.

These elements of teacher leadership and action research could be included and possibly more accurately detailed in the conceptual framework, were I to further elaborate. This leads to unanswered questions and possible future research; while important findings did emerge, often findings lead to more questions. And while there were some themes and cross-case findings, there are other pieces that this study did not address.

Unanswered Questions and Possible Future Research

As with any study, there are boundaries around what the findings do and don't tell us. In this regard, let me note at the outset several areas that this study does not address: the study has little to say about the impact of teacher leadership on others; that is, how it influences teachers' action, how it impacts classroom practice, and how it affects student achievement. These are all worthy topics, and areas we do not know that much about at present. Given that the action research experience appears to have sharpened the teacher leaders' inquiry skills, and most likely those of the teachers they were working with, it might follow that as teacher leaders continue this work with the teachers, the teachers' own practice will become more effective. This is certainly the hope of many districts' investment in teacher leadership development. So there is clearly an audience for this kind of investigation. As such, this could be considered for a possible future

line of research: to investigate the impact of action research and/or teacher leadership on others. In the case of action research, this would involve working with the cooperating teachers or other participants in the action research process and cycle of inquiry. It would be beneficial to the field, and to this work of action research, to try to determine more measurable outcomes of this work, concerning the impacts on teachers' practice, instructional decisions, and classroom outcomes. The current study does not take up these practices nor explore this line of inquiry. Doing so, in future research, could yield some more information about benefits of this work, and also serve to concretize the work, as in our current reform-based environment, outcomes, particularly on students and teachers' classrooms, are what often drives the important of the work, and thus the funding for this work.

Additionally, this study does not explore the connections between teacher leadership and teacher-colleague learning. It does not explore student learning outcomes that may occur as a result of this work. We have much to learn about the connections between teacher leadership and teacher and student learning (Michelson, 2013). Research has begun documenting how teacher leadership work is enacted in different settings by individuals in specific contexts, yet given the variation in the work, it is difficult to examine the impact of this work on student learning. At best, it is loose-coupling or a "causal chain" (Atteberry & Byrk, 2011) that delineates the complex pathway from teacher leadership to student learning through teacher practice. Future studies may try to connect teacher leader learning from problems of practice and changes in classroom practice and student learning.

Other areas of future research might build directly on what the study did find. One possible area of future research is another take on this line of work, looking at teacher leaders' growth and development in settings where they do not conduct mentored action research.

Another take could include studying other preparation programs or professional development programs for teacher leader learning to understand how participation (or non-participation, in the case of those who do not receive professional development support in these roles) impacts teachers' professional growth and development as leaders. One such dimension is to extend this same study to participants in other programs, and/or to include other teacher leaders who do not receive professional development.

In a follow-up study, research questions I might address would focus on similar themes. Initially, I would consider framing the research around:

1. How, if at all, does teacher leaders' conception of their leadership skills, knowledge, and abilities change through teacher leadership?
2. How do teacher leaders learn instructional skills and practices, and how is this learning manifested?

This research would continue to focus on role enactment and identity shaped by teacher leadership. From these additional cases, it would be interesting to compare outcomes, identity development, leadership skills, and enactment of the roles and how participants learn how to be teacher leaders. I have lingering questions about their supports, their learning curve, and if there are any differences in the growth and development of teacher leaders in other programs or situations without designated professional learning or support.

This report adds to the literature on teacher leadership development and, specifically, to what we know about how action research and inquiry processes can support professional learning. We know from research that teacher leaders often "learn on the job" but these cases show that mentored action research can provide structure for that learning. While it is not uncommon for university programs to support such research work, especially in masters' level programs for teacher development (see Ross et al., 2011 and Taylor et al., 2011), it is less

common to find a school district that supports such an endeavor and ties that effort to school-level improvement efforts. Further research is needed to locate and examine similar school district programs that support action research for leadership development. In comparing these cases with the MIL and Ridgetop cases, I would hope to learn more about how teachers become teacher leaders. If they do receive support in the form of professional learning, what does that look like, and what impact does it have on their work? In cases of districts and teachers becoming leaders without these supports, how do they learn to lead? I am curious about their efficacy, their identity, their practices and how they learn to carry out the work.

This study provided clues that may be a springboard to better conceptualize how action research provides a means for teacher leadership growth and development and as a catalyst for inquiry and conceptualization around the concepts of teacher leadership learning and capacity building. This study confirms previous research regarding the importance of teacher leaders' learning about how to support adult professional learning (Marsh et al., 2010; Marsh et al., 2008). Teacher leaders are, in part, responsible for helping teachers learn particular instructional practices. The work of teaching adults differs markedly from the work of teaching students (Gibson, 2005), and teacher leaders have much to learn about how to create conditions that support as well as push their peers' practices in particular directions (Michelson, 2013). The teacher leaders in this study learned much about their roles, how to investigate and take on problems of practice, action research processes, and even their own leadership identity and development. District leaders, administrators, and universities may consider how to create conditions for professional learning for teacher leaders so they can continue to develop in their roles.

From this study, we do not know the extent to which the problems of practice highlighted by their action research are encountered in other places at other times, or if they were a product of their experiences in particular schools and/or district contexts at a particular time. Future case study research may follow teacher leaders in a more general sense, as they encounter problems of practice in their daily work, versus such large-scale and deep probing questions as their action research projects required. Also, future research might follow the same teacher leaders over several years to examine whether or how their inquiry as stance continues to (or does not) shape their understanding of problems of daily practice, and also to determine more about the trajectory of their careers and work as teacher leaders over time.

Concluding Remarks:

What This Study Contributes to Scholarship and Practice

In conclusion, this dissertation study, sitting at the intersection of various research strands, offers new insights to the scholarly field. It may also provide contributions to districts or administrators hoping to develop teacher leaders, university programs that wish to partner with districts to provide professional development on teacher leadership, practitioners in teacher leadership settings, or those eager to take on teacher leadership roles.

Scholarly Contributions

This case investigation tells the story of how action research may have provided a way for teacher leaders to develop their skills, identities, and dispositions. Several contributions emerged from this. First, this study contributed to the growing body of literature around teacher leadership. More specifically, this study added value by reporting on findings that relate to the development of participants' identities as teacher leaders. This study revealed how new and

emergent identities are taken on, additively, and how this action research work contributed to the leaders' conceptions of self.

This study contributed to another strand of research, on the professional development that is targeted to leaders' learning, especially as teachers first come to view themselves as "leaders", with all that his self-designation entails. This study offers fresh perspective on the processes and support necessary to guide this professional learning.

Practical Contributions

The findings in this study may be useful to practitioners in several ways. Administrators at the school and/or district level may read this case-study to shape their own ideas about how to improve teacher leadership training and professional development. This may mean that administrators will look closely at the particular task of action research and the support structures in place for their teacher leaders and seek ways to improve teacher leaders' access to opportunities for growth and development.

These teacher leaders as researchers developed significant professional knowledge that can and should be accumulated (Zeichner, 2007). They created innovative practices and contributed to local understandings regarding how to serve students and how to work together to improve educational outcomes. The voices of these action researchers and the local knowledge created by them should not go unheard. It is imperative that educational researchers help synthesize across such studies to contribute to a broader discourse about the educational improvement and the achievement of powerful experiences for all students.

Additionally, this study highlights the need for training to improve how teachers develop as leaders, and how this work (i.e., action research) may have positively shaped their work as

teacher leaders. Based on these findings, schools, districts, and universities, as well as groups of or individual teacher leaders, may want to examine current and future approaches to professional growth and development of teacher leaders.

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Appendix A.

Interview Protocols

Brief Demographic/Background Survey

Hi,

In preparation for our interview this week, I am hoping you can take a few minutes to briefly answer these survey questions. They are intended to be completed quickly, so please just respond with short answers and/or lists; do not feel the need to write an essay. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you!

1. **Tell me about your educational background; where did you go to college and what degree(s) have you earned?** (sample answer: UW, BS in Science & Central, Masters in Teaching)
2. **What professional certificates have you earned?** (sample answer: National Board, ProCert, ELL endorsement)
3. **What PD have you attended?** (sample answer: AVID, Literacy Strategies, Cognitive Coaching, Mentoring Matters)
4. **Tell me about your teaching career; how many years have you taught? Where and what have you taught?** (sample answer: 14 years, Plano High School Science in Texas, Hazen High School Biology in WA)
5. **What leadership roles have you taken on?** (sample answer: Dept Head, SIP team, PTSA rep, Club advisor)
6. **What is your current role/title?** (sample answer: Science teacher, Dept Head, Club Advisor & SIP team member)
7. **What are you main duties/responsibilities?** (sample answer: conduct learning walks, present ELL strategies at staff meetings and for PD, hold and preside over dept meetings, observe teachers and provide feedback, coach teachers around ELL instructional strategies, work with small groups of students, conduct testing, organize and analyze assessment data)
8. **Where do you work?** (sample answer: Highline district office/ERAC and at three high schools in Highline)

Case Study (Qualitative) Interview Protocols

(60 minutes)

Interview I (completed in 2012)

Introduction

Thank you for meeting with me and talking with me about your work. You probably remember that this interview is part of the data that I am gathering for a small research project. I am interested in how action research impacts the learning and development of teacher leaders and how it affects their work with their colleagues. I am hoping to learn a lot about this topic from you and your colleagues.

Please know that in writing up the research, I will use pseudonyms for people and places, so it won't be clear to a larger audience who you are or identifying details. I want to maintain confidentiality, and I really want to hear about your ideas about teacher leadership and action research, so please speak freely.

Are there any questions that I can answer for you about the project before we get started? With your permission, I would like to record our conversation so that I can refer back to it, but I will also probably take notes to jog my own memory. Are we okay to proceed?

Closing

1. **Is there anything else you'd like to tell me on the topic of teacher leadership or action research?**

Thanks again for your time. I really appreciate your input and your honest, self-reflective answers. Thanks!

General background

1. **So just introduce me to yourself in this school.** (How long have you been here? Teaching what to whom? When did you take on this Teacher Leadership role? What motivated you to take it on?)
2. **Now tell me about your work as a teacher leader in your school district.** (What is the work and how do you do it?)
3. **Give me a couple of examples from the past week's work. Who were you working with and what were you trying to accomplish?** (How did you prepare for this, if at all? What was the impetus for this work? *(listen for: request from teacher, assignment from principal/boss, other?)* Examples: Conducted professional development, presented at a staff meeting, conferences with a teacher, observed a teacher)

Beliefs on teaching and learning

4. **Help me understand your perspectives on high quality teaching and learning**. (In your area of teaching and learning, what would you expect to see in a well-functioning classroom? What would the teacher be doing? What would the students be doing?)
5. **What is your vision of the role of a good teacher leader**? (What is the role of a teacher leader? How do teacher leaders help push growth/change?)

PD/growth

6. **Can you tell me about your professional growth and development as a teacher leader**? (Where and how have you learned to do your job? What kinds of support do you get/from whom (like-folks in district, principal/boss?)?)

7. **When did you first start doing teacher leadership work, either formally or informally?** (What prompted you to exercise leadership with your colleagues around instructional issues? How did you develop an initial picture of this work and what it meant to do it well?)

8. **Since that time, what further milestones have there been in your growth as a teacher leader?** What have been the most important sources of your learning? (key events, mentors, sources of feedback)

9. **What obstacles, if any, are there in carrying out your teacher leadership work?**

Action Research

10. **Tell me about your current project**. (Why is it important to you? What questions are driving this project? How and why did you choose those questions? What actions do you hope to shape by conducting this inquiry?)

11. **Where are you in the process of your project?** (What stage/phase are you in?)

12. **Who else is participating in this project**? (Whose classrooms or other aspects of the school are implicated in your action research design? How are they participating? As collaborators? Subjects?)

13. **How have you learned how to do action research?** (Who or what has been guiding you as you take on this project? *(coursework, mentorship, modeling from others, past experiences)*)

14. **What are your hopes and expectations for your project**? (For yourself? Others?)

15. **What challenges, if any, are you encountering in conducting your action research**? (administration, time, teachers, structures)

16. **What do you hope to learn from doing this project?**

17. **How does your action research relate to your teacher leadership work, if at all?** *(Are there any ways in which it impacts your picture of what teacher leaders do/can do?)*

Closing

18. **Is there anything else you'd like to tell me on the topic of teacher leadership or action research?**

Thanks again for your time. I really appreciate your input and your honest, self-reflective answers. Thanks!

Interview II (completed in 2013)

Introduction

Thank you for meeting with me to do a second interview about your teacher leadership and action research work. You probably remember that this interview is for information purposes to learn more about your program.

Are there any questions that I can answer for you before we get started? With your permission, I would like to record our conversation so that I can refer back to it, and I will also take notes to jog my own memory. Are we okay to proceed?

Teacher leadership work

2. **Tell me about your recent work as a teacher leader; can you give me a couple of examples from the past week's work. Who were you working with and what were you trying to accomplish?** (How did you prepare for this, if at all? What was the impetus for this work? (listen for: request from teacher, assignment from principal/boss, other?) Examples: Conducted professional development, presented at a staff meeting, conferences with a teacher, observed a teacher)

Beliefs on teaching and learning

3. **Last time we talked about your work as a teacher leader; can you tell me more your vision of the role of a good teacher leader?** (What is the role of a teacher leader? How do teacher leaders help push growth/change?)
4. **We also talked about your views of high quality teaching and learning, can you tell me more about what that looks like?** (What would you expect to see in a well-functioning classroom? What would the teacher be doing? What would the students be doing?)

PD/growth

5. **In conducting your teacher leadership work, what kinds of support do you get and from whom?** (like-folks in district, principal/boss?)
6. **Can you tell me more about your teacher leadership work and experiences, either formally or informally?** (What prompted you to exercise leadership with your colleagues around instructional issues? How did you develop a picture of this work and what it means to do it well?)
7. **What obstacles, if any, have there in carrying out your teacher leadership or action research work?**

Action Research

8. **Tell me about your current project; how is it going?** (What questions are driving your project? Have your research questions changed? If they have changed, how and why did they change? What actions do you hope to shape by conducting this inquiry?)
9. **Where are you in the process of your project?** (What stage/phase are you in?)
10. **Has there been any change in who is participating in this project?** (Whose classrooms or other aspects of the school are implicated in your action research design? How are they participating? As collaborators? Subjects?)

11. **Tell me about your recent learning and or any changes in your learning around action research since we last met.** (Who or what has been guiding you as you take on this project? (coursework, mentorship, modeling from others, past experiences))
12. **What are your hopes and expectations for your project?** (Have they changed at all as you have taken on this work? If so, how have they changed?)
13. **What challenges, if any, are you encountering in conducting your action research?** (Administration, time, teachers, structures)
14. **What do you hope to learn from doing this project?** (About yourself? Others? Teacher leadership or action research work?)
15. **How is your action research relating to your teacher leadership work, if at all?** (Are there any ways in which it impacts your picture of what teacher leaders do/can do?)

Interview III (completed in the Fall of 2014)

Introduction

Thank you for meeting with me to do another interview about your teacher leadership and action research work. This interview is part of the data that I am gathering for a small research project. I am interested in how action research impacts the learning and development of teacher leaders and how it affects their work with their colleagues.

Please know that in writing up the research, I will use pseudonyms for people and places, so it won't be clear to a larger audience who you are or identifying details. I want to maintain confidentiality, and I really want to hear about your ideas about teacher leadership and action research, so please speak freely.

Are there any questions that I can answer for you before we get started? With your permission, I would like to record our conversation so that I can refer back to it, and I will also take notes to jog my own memory. Are we okay to proceed?

Teacher leadership work

1. **Tell me about your recent work as a teacher leader; can you give me a couple of examples from the past week's work. Who were you working with and what were you trying to accomplish?** (How did you prepare for this, if at all? What was the impetus for this work? (listen for: request from teacher, assignment from principal/boss, other?) Examples: Conducted professional development, presented at a staff meeting, conferences with a teacher, observed a teacher)

Beliefs on teaching and learning

2. **Can you tell me about your vision of the role of a good teacher leader?** (What is the role of a teacher leader? How do teacher leaders help push growth/change?)
3. **Tell me about your views of high quality teaching and learning, what does that look like?** (What would you expect to see in a well-functioning classroom? What would theteacher be doing? What would the students be doing?)

PD/growth

4. **In conducting your teacher leadership work, what kinds of support do you get and from whom?** (like-folks in district, principal/boss?)

5. **Can you tell me more about your teacher leadership work and experiences, either formally or informally?** (What prompted you to exercise leadership with your colleagues around instructional issues? How did you develop a picture of this work and what it means to do it well?)
6. **What obstacles, if any, have there in carrying out your teacher leadership work?**

Teacher Leadership & Action Research

7. **Since completing your program, have you engaged in action research in any way?** (Have you taken on another action research project? Have you conducted further research-based inquiry? What did you learn from your program that has carried over into your teacher leadership work? How have you changed as a teacher leader as a result of having conducted action research? How do you do your job differently as a result of your participation in action research? What changes have you seen in yourself that you can contribute to action research and your participation in your program? Have you seen other changes in your colleagues/school/district as a result of your action research?)
8. **How do you continue to learn and grow as a teacher leader?**
9. **Tell me about your recent learning and or any changes in your learning around your role and/or teacher leadership since we last met.** (Who or what has been guiding your work? (coursework, mentorship, modeling from others, past experiences))
10. **Where do you see yourself in 5 years?** (Have you changed roles or jobs? Have you changed the way you do/conduct your work? If so, how have you changed?)
11. **What did you learn from collaborative engagement in action research?** (About yourself? Others? Teacher leadership or action research work?)
12. **How is your action research relating to your teacher leadership work, if at all?** (Are there any ways in which it impacts your picture of what teacher leaders do/can do?)

Closing

13. **Is there anything else you'd like to tell me on the topic of teacher leadership or action research?**

Thanks again for your time. I really appreciate your input and your honest, self-reflective answers. Thanks!

Appendix B.

Observation Guides

Topics to consider while observing training events/action research classes/seminars

- Who is present at the training event?
- Who is the leader? What are the objectives for the training?
- What are the intended outcomes of the training and how are these outcomes accomplished?
- What level of participation or involvement is the instructor responsible for? What level of participation or involvement is asked of the teacher leaders?
- What group norms are in place? What group dynamics do I notice? How do these norms and dynamics influence participants' learning?
- Who participates and how much? (What voices are the loudest/most influential? Who is silent?)
- How is leadership exercised or practiced during training events? Do participants have opportunities to exercise leadership? How is their leadership grown in these training seminars? Through exercises or through literature?
- How do people talk about their action research work? (Are protocols being used?) How do they talk about their problems of practice and development of research questions, data gathering methods, and an inquiry stance in particular?
- What discussion/interaction occurs between classmates?
- What issues, if any, are talked about related to action research?
- Apart from action research, what inquiry stance is assumed, if any, in the training? (Listen/watch for: question asking, plans to seek out info, thinking aloud about what data/info means, how data/info is interpreted)
- What is the "work" of this training? (Who has what role? How do they come to be in their role(s)?)
- How does the training conclude? (How long was the training? When are they meeting next? Agenda items, tasks to complete, carry over to next seminar?)

Topics to consider while observing building leadership meetings/teacher leadership events

- Who attends the meeting or professional development?
- What is on the agenda? (Are decisions being made? What is the decision-making process? What is the nature of the information being shared at the meeting?)
- Who is leading the meeting or training? Who participates and how much? (What voices are the loudest/most influential? Who is silent?)

- What leadership roles and presence do the focal teacher leader(s) assume in this meeting/event? (Do they exercise leadership formally, informally, or both? About what, and in what ways? How do others respond to the teacher leader(s)?)
- How do people talk about the school and related issues? (Are protocols being used?) How do they talk about instructional improvement in particular?
- What discussion/interaction occurs between leadership team members?
- Is an inquiry stance assumed, at all, in the meeting or professional development session? (Listen/watch for: question asking, plans to seek out info, thinking aloud about what data/info means, how data/info is interpreted)
- What is the "work" of the leadership team in this meeting/event? (Who has what role? How do they come to be in their role(s)?)
- How does the meeting conclude? (How long was the meeting? When are they meeting next? Agenda items, tasks to complete, carry over to next meeting?)

Appendix C.

Document Review Guide

Topics to consider while reviewing documents collected as part of the action research process from observed training events/action research classes/seminars:

- What is the purpose of the document (e.g. meeting agenda, curricular materials used in the class/seminar, drafts of action research projects)?
- How, if at all, does this document contribute to participants' thinking and work around action research?
- How, if at all, does this document contribute to participant's thinking and work around teacher leadership?
- How, if at all, does this document contribute to participants' shifts or changes in identity?
- What are the intended outcomes of the use/creation of this document, and how does this document accomplish these outcomes?
- What level of participation or involvement is the instructor responsible for? What level of participation or involvement is asked of the teacher leaders?
- How, if at all, is leadership exercised or practiced through these documents? Do participants have opportunities to exercise leadership through these documents? How is their leadership grown in using these document? Through protocols or written work?
- How are these documents connected to or a part of their action research work? How do these documents move their action research work forward? Does it guide their thinking about their problems of practice and development of research questions, data gathering methods, and an inquiry stance in particular?
- What is the "work" of these documents? (Protocols for participation? Thinking/learning guides to shape their action research? Drafts of their action research?) How is this work connected to their other work (teacher leadership, teacher leader identity development)?