The Effects of a Shared Vision of Teacher Leadership on Classroom Teachers' Instruction

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The Effects of a Shared Vision of Teacher Leadership on Classroom Teachers’ Instruction

By

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A Dissertation Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated first and foremost, to my husband, Travis. While I can’t promise this is the last of my papers you’ll be reading, I can’t thank you enough for your support, numerous sacrifices, patience, and steadfast love. This is not just my accomplishment but an endeavor we weathered together.

Second, to my beautiful daughters: Julianna, Lillian, Christina, and Brielle. You have been so patient and understanding as I spent many precious hours of your childhood studying, researching, and writing. What started as a mission to make education better for you close to home developed into an opportunity to have a much larger impact. As strong women, I hope you realize you can do anything you put your mind to, and even the sky is not a limit.

To my parents, Bruce and Darlene, my first teachers: My success is a testament of your success as loving and supportive parents. Thank you for instilling in me a sense of tenacity to see things through, strong work ethic to do them well, and the importance of doing what’s right even if it’s difficult. And to my siblings, Paul and Kadie, for the humor to get me through and your encouragement and support.

And finally, to all of my family and friends, past and present, who have supported and encouraged me on this journey. Leadership is a choice, but not one that can be successful without people to learn from, be inspired by, and to serve. I am truly humbled by the support I’ve received.
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Abstract

Many models of instructional teacher leadership exist in schools with various outcomes for teachers. The aim of this case study was to understand systemic alignment in a formal teacher leadership system and how this alignment impacted instructional change. This dissertation was framed by three research questions: 1) How do the rationales of teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators regarding teacher leadership in their school align? 2) How does the coherence of a system of leadership impact classroom teachers’ abilities to engage with formal teacher leaders? 3) How does the coherence of a system of leadership impact classroom teachers’ abilities to implement instructional changes?

A qualitative case study was conducted utilizing semi-structured interviews in one rural school in Minnesota. The participants included one K–12 principal, two high school teacher leaders, two high school teachers, two elementary teacher leaders, and two elementary teachers, and a district Q Comp Coordinator. Role theory (Biddle 1979; Katz & Kahn, 1978; & Turner, 2002) was the theoretical framework used to analyze the data. The findings yielded two scenarios: The elementary in which systemic alignment and a positive engaging culture was associated with the teachers’ willingness to implement instructional change; and the high school in which a slight variation in the shared vision regarding ownership rendered role conflict, periods of teacher-teacher leader disengagement, and teacher instructional changes dependent upon feelings of ownership and relevance.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Background of the Study

Teachers have the most impact on students’ educational outcomes (Lumpkin et al., 2014; McKenzie & Locke, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Therefore, it is imperative that students are exposed to teachers who stay current with best pedagogical practices, changing cultural demands, social emotional learning research, and rigorous 21st century academic and career-ready standards. However, a very complex problem has loomed: How do educational leaders provide the necessary professional development to accomplish these lofty goals with a vast array of teachers of all ages, experiences, beliefs, and content areas, each with their own classrooms of students with just as varied needs? To further complicate the problem, there has been a sense of global urgency as economic, social, and political issues arise, budgets become more limited, and teachers are leaving the field. Principals cannot shoulder this complex responsibility alone, and outside consultants cannot possibly understand the needs of every student or teacher. One solution is to leverage the knowledge, skills, and wills of teachers in the leadership of schools and implementation of job-embedded professional development.

The rationales, roles, and ways in which these teacher leaders interact with colleagues has evolved over the last 40 years. Beginning in the early 1980’s, primarily administrative or managerial roles, such as department chairs and union leaders, emerged as leadership positions for teachers. In the mid to late 1980s, merit pay systems and career ladder programs emerged, designed to leverage the pedagogical expertise and social capital of teachers to act as instructional leaders. Finally, from the late 1980s and early 1990s to today, in response to unprecedented pressure for accountability through legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 and changing student populations, teacher leaders have been utilized to change the
cultures of the schools and carry forward educational reform all while emphasizing collaboration and reflection among colleagues (Silva et al., 2000). The roles of teacher leaders are historically and presently varied, complex, context specific, and often result in mixed outcomes for students, teachers, and teacher leaders themselves (Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

The clarity and purpose of teacher leadership roles was cited as a problem and point of attention throughout the literature on teacher leadership (Bagley & Margolis, 2018; Cooper et al., 2016; Coquyt, 2019; Liethwood et al., 2007; Lumpkin et al., 2014; Mangin, 2005; Margolis & Doring, 2012; McKenzie & Locke, 2014; Struyve et al., 2014; Weiner, 2011). Although this was a common theme, a gap existed in the literature that did not address the issue of a coherent system of teacher leadership from the classroom teacher’s perspective. Simply creating a job description does not do this problem justice. The underlying rationale for the teacher leadership system and each role within it needs to be clear (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Principals, teachers, and teacher leaders themselves need to be able to answer why teacher leaders are needed and what they are supposed to do. Principals, teachers, and teacher leaders could have very different definitions and ideas based on their own needs, perceived needs of others, and experiences.

Frustration and lack of implementation is often the result of unmet or unclear expectations. Conversely, success could be the result of synergy between parties and mutual understanding of the purpose and complexities surrounding an idea. However, continued success relies on the ability of the actors in the environment to adapt to change (Leithwood & Strauss, 2010). The roles of teacher leaders and related underpinning rationales could change as the culture within the school changes, teachers learn, and student needs arise, leading to challenged past practices, assumptions, and philosophies (Leithwood & Strauss, 2010; Spillane, 2006). From a top-down approach, there has been an urgent push for quality control as students need to be
exposed to talented teachers and progress toward the goals and philosophies institutions pushed. Additionally, from a grass roots approach, there has been a need for teachers to innovate, meet their own professional goals, and meet the needs of the students in front of them (Fullan, 2011). Where, then, does this leave the role of teacher leaders?

This study was situated in the critical intersection of these viewpoints, leading to this investigation of the systemic alignment of teacher leadership systems and its effects on teacher’s instructional decision making. Ultimately, the decision to change a part of practice lies with the individual teacher as one examines the needs of the students, his or her educational philosophy, internal and external motivations, personal skills, and the goals and philosophy of the institution (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Spillane, 1999). Examining what teachers expect and desire from teacher leaders, versus what administration deems necessary, and how teacher leaders understand their roles could shed light as to why some teachers find engaging with teacher leaders a more successful, impactful experience than others.

It is this relationship between perceptions of teacher leadership, classroom teachers’ willingness to engage with teacher leaders in collaborative efforts, and changes in instructional practices that I have observed during my time as a district’s Quality Compensation (Q Comp) Coordinator. Q Comp “is a voluntary program that allows local districts and exclusive representatives of the teachers to design and collectively bargain a plan that… [addresses] Career Ladder/Advancement Options, Job-embedded Professional Development, Teacher Evaluation, and Performance Pay and Alternative Salary Schedule” (Minnesota Department of Education, 2019).

As Coordinator of this program for five years, I worked with a team to implement district’s Q Comp plan including training of teacher leaders and the staff, evaluating the
outcomes of the plan, and making suggestions for improvement. As part of the evaluation process, I collected qualitative and quantitative data via surveys, observations, and conversations with teacher leaders, administrators, and teachers. I found significant variance in the amount of teacher engagement with instructional teacher leaders, philosophies of education and organizational development, and teachers’ implemented changes from the job embedded professional development opportunities (Bockelmann, 2018). The most prominent themes from teachers and teacher leaders alike were that of top-down mandates, the stance that changing teachers was not the job of other teachers, and the desire for collaboration but on one’s own terms. The amount of self-identified instructional changes varied widely among teachers in this district. The study at hand investigated the relationship of systems alignment and classroom teachers’ receptivity to teacher leaders via reflection on teaching practices.

In this study, the work of Biddle (1979), Katz and Kahn (1978), and Turner (2002) regarding role theory was utilized as the theoretical framework for this study. Role theory is “a science concerned with the study of behaviors that are characteristic of persons within contexts and various processes, that presumably produce, explain, or are affected by those behaviors” (Biddle, 1979, p. 4). Role theory consists of three broad aspects including the development of the function of the role and shared expectations regarding the role; role conflict during times of transition and contextual influences surrounding the transition; and resolution of role conflicts. Role theory will serve as a robust framework to organize the perspectives of principals, teacher leaders, and teachers regarding the presence of, or lack of, coherence regarding the function and underlying philosophies of the role of a teacher leader. Finally, role theory provides a framework to understand how teachers perceive underpinning intentions of teacher leaders.

Theoretical Framework
Ultimately, leaders need to consider a combination of theories from the fields of education and organizational psychology to grasp the complexities of teacher leadership. Among the most popularly cited theories in the teacher leadership literature are: self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), attribution theory (Weiner, 2010), social-cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989), adult learning theory (Knowles, 1978), zones of enactment (Spillane, 1999), social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), role theory (Biddle, 1979). Each of these theories complement the other, giving leaders several lenses through which to study human behavior.

Role theory was chosen for this study as it encompasses aspects of all these theories into a complex framework. Teacher leadership is a complex system, not easily understood by one theory alone. Role theory spans psychology, sociology, and anthropology allowing for a wide and flexible framework that encompasses individual and collective patterns of behavior and underlying phenomenon associated with these patterns (Biddle, 1979, pp. 11–13). Role theory provides researchers insight as to how a role integrates with other roles in the system and why the role is organized the way it is (p. 70). Foundational assumptions to role theory are (a) patterns of behavior are context dependent, (b) roles are linked to those with a common identity, (c) people are held to expectations, (d) roles are embedded in a social system, and (e) people must be taught roles (Biddle, 1979, p. 8).

Role theory is not only a framework to explore how roles are enacted, but how they are developed and differentiated from alter roles, how role conflicts arise and are resolved, how others influence the development of roles, and how others influence compliance to expectations through external and internal motivation. Katz and Kahn (1978) discussed how role expectations are sent, received, and perceived by others. Biddle (1979) further pointed out that leaders place different types of pressure to change the expectations and of roles, influence conformity, or
change contexts (social systems). Pressures from one’s self to change are referred to as self-motivating, and pressures toward others are referred to as influences (Biddle, 1979, p. 127). In organizations, those assigned to hierarchical roles wield the power to influence behavior via several methods including sanctions and cathexis (an appeal to values).

Biddle (1979), Katz and Kahn (1978), and Turner (2002) all referred to role theory for the study of education organizations. Role theory applies to teacher leadership as teacher leadership roles are relatively new roles that are often surrounded by a lack of coherence regarding the function and expectations of the role. Furthermore, role conflict is a rampant issue surrounding teacher leadership that includes the ideas of ambiguity, inter- and intra-role conflict, role transition, and is subject to the context and culture of the surrounding social system. Finally, the ability of teachers to accept the roles of teacher leaders and work in concert by mutually influencing one another, is a sign of a coherent system of teacher leadership.

**Need for the Study**

Teachers’ experiences with teacher leaders vary depending on competing understandings of the roles and underlying philosophies of teacher leadership, complex social politics, varying personal skills, and student needs. Furthermore, a complex and symbiotic relationship exists between the culture of the school, coherence surrounding teacher leader roles, and the teacher leadership practices. As the culture of a school changes, and teachers become more willing to work collaboratively, the roles of the teacher leaders may change. The fact of the matter is humans are complex with varying needs, experiences, and philosophies creating over-lapping, different, and new perspectives all intermingling within the same school, district, state, nation, and this world. This is the context in which teacher leadership is situated.

At the local level, a triangular relationship exists between the principal, teacher leaders,
and classroom teachers, with student needs in the center of this relationship (see Figure 1). Although all actors in an educational system will benefit in some way from teacher leadership, many agree that the ultimate goal of education, and teacher leadership, is to ultimately impact students.

**Figure 1**

*Basic Teacher Leadership Model*

The problem lies in how specifically teachers, administrators, and teacher leaders view the purpose and roles of teacher leaders, and the willingness of teachers to engage with teacher leaders. An alignment or misalignment of the purpose or shared vision of teacher leadership between the three parties may be a contributing factor to the success of teacher leadership as measured by classroom teacher’s ability to improve instructional practices (see Figure 2).

York-Barr and Duke (2004) distilled a vast body of research regarding teacher leadership into themes including the importance and impacts of teacher leadership, characteristics of effective teacher leaders, informal versus formal teacher leadership, the development of teacher leadership systems, the micropolitics of professional relationships and culture, the role of the administrator, and theoretical frameworks. Since then, the literature and business of teacher leadership has grown to include teacher leadership standards, models of coaching, and teacher
leadership certifications and degrees (Coquyt, 2019; Knight, 2011; Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). The underlying function of teacher leadership drives the overall implementation and success of the system, which impacts all these other areas, thus driving the focus and importance of this study.

It is important to examine a system from all perspectives in order to understand its function, or lack thereof. For instance, the following were themes gleaned from the literature using the perspectives of teachers, instructional teacher leaders, and administrators. This list is not exhaustive and may overlap. From the teachers’ perspectives, previous studies have found the issues of egalitarianism among teachers, top-down driven mandates, and evaluative practices to be major barriers to effective teacher leadership (Achinstein, 2002; Fariman & Makenzie, 2015; Flood & Angelle, 2017; Fullan, 2011; Harris, 2003; Mangin, 2005). From the perspective of instructional teacher leaders, barriers include unclear expectations and lack of training (Cooper et al., 2016; Coquyt 2019; Margolis & Doring, 2012; Mckenzie & Locke, 2014; Liethwood et al., 2007). Finally, from an administrative perspective, building culture and union issues were among barriers to effective teacher leadership (Barth, 1991; Guenert & Whitaker, 2005; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Weiner, 2011). It seemed literature and practice have begun to move passed whether or not teacher leadership should be implemented, but how to implement it effectively and in a way that is beneficial to all teachers.

Taking closer look at the simple teacher leadership model from Figure 1, Figure 2 illustrates a symbiotic and complex system of teacher leadership that impacts its own functioning and coherence.
The relationships, school culture, and types of supports between each party, impact their visions regarding the purpose of teacher leadership. The purposes of teacher leadership are enacted through roles. Roles are judged through the eye of the beholder (Biddle, 1979). During the review of the literature in Chapter 2, studies will be discussed that will illuminate the relationships and contributing factors of coherent system of teacher leadership as depicted in Figure 2.

Limited research directly investigated the underlying philosophies of each of these groups in one study, let alone asked teachers to prioritize their experiences with instructional teacher leaders among other reasons for their instructional decisions. Creating learning cultures conducive to teacher leadership requires all parties to reflect upon the system, their beliefs, and practices (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

**Purpose of the Study**
As Dr. Kristie Kauerz (Kauerz & Coffman, 2013) wisely stated, “There needs to be more intentional focus on the changes that need to occur in adult behaviors/skills, and to the system itself, before meaningful child outcomes will be realized.” This contributed to the literature from an organizational leadership standpoint. Entire states in the United States are implementing models of teacher leadership utilizing state-wide frameworks that suggest a common vision or philosophy, a needs assessment, and clear roles (American Institutes for Research, 2019). A study that directly investigates the significance of the clarity of roles, vision, or foundational philosophy directly has not been found. Furthermore, significant amounts of time and resources are devoted to teacher leadership. It is the duty of public education officials to be good stewards of public funds to ensure the educational success of their students (Sorenson & Goldsmith, 2013). More research is needed regarding the various aspects of teacher leadership as it shows promise in aiding educational reform.

Teacher leadership is an evolving middle ground in the education profession that is still not the norm. Teacher leadership characterizes Tajfel and Turner’s (1979) social identity theory in which social in groups and out groups are created. Social identity theory is closely related to role theory in the comparison of a role to alter roles. The argument that instructional teacher leaders are not administrators, but are doing something different than the typical teacher, often creates role confusion and breeds mistrust if role coherence is not sought. Teacher leadership is becoming normalized via advanced degrees with a focus on teacher leadership, leadership training earlier in pre-service teacher development training, and the latest wave of teacher evaluation and peer review. The purpose of this study was to expose the ways in which teacher leadership was viewed by different stakeholders within an organization and reflect upon the outcomes regarding teacher practice. This study added to the knowledge base of organizational
leadership in education by examining teacher leadership from a systemic standpoint, the pragmatic standpoint of teachers, and patterns of behavior between the roles of teacher, teacher leaders, and principals.

**Significance of the Study**

Principals are the designers of the systems and culture under which teacher leadership operates (Lumpkin et al., 2014). Administrators should have a vested interest in reflecting upon the systems in the district including factors that enhance and inhibit the outcomes; in this case advances in the development of teachers. Administrators should understand how their stakeholders understand the expectations, roles, and purposes of teacher leadership as these viewpoints can impact the culture of the entire school. In congruence with Biddle’s (1979), Katz and Kahn’s (1989) and Turner’s (2002) descriptions of role theory, administrators can reflect upon the findings of this study to understand the importance of coherence surrounding the role of teacher leadership, how culture (context) impacts this understanding, and how teachers internalize the attempts of teacher leaders to influence teachers’ practice. Capitalizing on this knowledge will help administrators move systems and people forward to impact student achievement.

The relationship between the teacher leaders and teachers is important as these are the people working closest together in most teacher leadership systems. In Figure 3, bold arrows are added to the factors impacting a system of teacher leadership to underscore the added complexity of relationships between teachers and teacher leaders. More importantly, the significance of this study illuminated why a deep understanding of teacher leadership is important. A, if not the most significant, goal of teacher leadership is to impact classroom teacher’s instruction, so student outcomes will be realized, as emphasized by the additions in Figure 3.
This study may raise the awareness of teachers and teacher leaders about their own beliefs regarding teacher leadership. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) pointed out that examining one’s philosophies “may reveal areas of incongruence between individual teacher beliefs and values, and the operating assumptions of their schools” (p. 171). In combination with the research on role theory, the more salient the expectations are, and the more congruent they are to one’s beliefs, the more likely they are to be accepted or acted upon (Biddle, 1979). In order to create a shared vision, individuals must first understand their own assumptions and then communicate these effectively (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). This study will assist administrators and leadership teams to understand how differences of expectations and philosophies can impact the success of a system. Furthermore, as teachers report their
experiences with teacher leaders, administrators can assess how much emphasis to place, and on what aspect, of teacher leadership systems.

Finally, teacher leadership systems as a form of professional development need to be clarified, and successful and unsuccessful models or aspects and their contexts need to be reported as researchers and administrators strive to find features of models that enhance or inhibit success and fit their settings. Administrators can use the findings from studies such as this to help design effective training and systems based on the needs of their teachers.

**Research Questions**

1. How do the rationales of teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators regarding teacher leadership in their school align?

2. How does the coherence of a system of leadership impact classroom teachers’ abilities to engage with formal teacher leaders?

3. How does the coherence of a system of leadership impact classroom teachers’ abilities to implement instructional changes?

**Definition of Terms**

**Instruction.** Instruction is "the purposeful direction of the learning process" (Joyce et al., 2003). Instruction encompasses the ways in which teachers address the planning, delivery, assessment, and management of their content and students.

**Principal.** A principal is an administrator holding a valid license in their state that is practicing in a K–12 school district (Principals, 1959/2014). The principal administers the operations of the school including curriculum, instruction, safety, and managerial duties as assigned by the school board.
**Purpose.** The job description, responsibilities, ways of acting, and outcomes projected upon an individual (Lumpkin et al., 2014).

**Rationale.** A rationale is an underlying reason for an opinion, belief, practice, or phenomenon (Miriam Webster Dictionary, 2019).

**Teacher.** “‘Teacher’ means a classroom teacher or other similar professional employee required to hold a license from the [MN] Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board” (Teacher, 1967/2017). As this state has four tiers of teachers, teachers in any of the tiers are included (Teachers and Other Educators, 2017).

**Teacher Leader.** According to York-Barr and Duke (2004, p. 228), “Teacher leadership is an umbrella term that includes a wide variety of work at multiple levels in educational systems including work with students, colleagues, and administrators and work that is focused on instructional, professional and organizational development.” For the purposes of this study, a teacher leader is a teacher in a formalized role created by the district, either appointed or voted in by the local teachers, and may or may not be compensated or released from their regular teaching duties to perform this role. A professional learning community (PLC) facilitator or Peer Coach are examples of teacher leaders used in this study.

**Research Design**

This study adheres to the social constructivist interpretive paradigm. Social constructivism is characterized by the presence of “multiple realities constructed through our lived experiences and interactions with others” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 35). This study will investigate the perspectives and lived experiences of three different and interdependent groups:
principals, teacher leaders, and classroom teachers. Each participant will have a different view of reality and story to share regarding their perspectives of teacher leaders and instructional change.

This study falls under the qualitative research paradigm and will use a case study methodology. Each teacher leadership system is uniquely designed according to the setting and needs of the teachers and students. Though context limits the generalizability of the study, it is necessary to illuminate teacher leadership systems and their inherent barriers and success for others to observe and continue to innovate (Bagley & Margolis, 2018). When participants are interviewed, their unique perspectives and rationales will be sought and compared to find commonalities and difference between them. The interviews will allow pointed questions to be asked but also allow for a flow of ideas and a mutually constructed reality to develop between the participant and the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

A phenomenological approach would not have been appropriate as this study consists of two parts and draws conclusions between them as a lens for systemic improvement. Though both phenomenology and case study require a recount of the lived experiences of participants, one single phenomenon is not being studied as in phenomenology, rather, a system was studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 37; Yazan, 2015). A grounded theory approach might have been used if a hypothesis did not already exist and a specific phenomenon pinpointed to illuminate. Surveys could also have been used to garner quantitative data regarding the perspectives of the participants, however the rich descriptions of the situation and reasons behind the responses of the participants that are needed to answer the complex research questions would be missed (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In order to describe this school and its system of teacher leadership, documents will need to be reviewed such as iterations of the Q Comp Plan, teacher leader training documents,
position evaluation rubrics, Oversight meeting minutes, Site review documents, and perhaps conduct additional interviews. Considering additional existing data such as documents and observations are also characteristic to a case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Assumptions

This qualitative study case study is grounded in constructivism. Ontologically, constructivism asserts that multiple realities are constructed by the individuals and may differ based on context (Badewi, 2013). Applied to this study, one school’s teacher leadership system may be different from another, and individuals within one school construct their realities based on their situations, experiences, beliefs, and social interactions.

Epistemologically, this study is approached through an interpretivist lens, specifically through the social constructivist paradigm. Social constructivism is characterized by individuals constructing meaning from the world around them, and researchers relying on the participants’ view of the situation (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 24). Participants are assumed to have told the truth and divulged their own philosophies and reflections. Reality is constructed between the researcher and the participants. Although participants will be listened to openly and efforts made to understand their realities, the interpretation of the findings will inherently be shaped by the researcher’s experiences and knowledge.

Divulging axiological assumptions will help to position the researcher in this study and provide a background to the development of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I have taught for fifteen years, the last five both teaching and serving as a Q Comp Coordinator. During my time coordinating, I also acquired administrative licenses, and served as a peer observer and professional learning community facilitator. My experiences as a teacher, peer instructional leader, and an organizational leader in an underperforming district, gave me a well-rounded view
SHARED VISION OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP

of teacher leadership. The teacher leadership system changed immensely over the five-year period in response to organizational learning. It was a combination of participating in a complex evolutionary process, five years of observing teachers’ practice, developing professional development, and conducting the annual evaluation of the system, that I came to understand the dichotomy between exercising external control and fostering autonomy during whole school reform. More importantly, I witnessed incongruence between the philosophies of teacher leadership among all parties, and varied teacher reports of the effectiveness of the system.

This study will be conducted in a different district of which I have no affiliation and has an established system of formal teacher leadership. I will consider the multiple realities and interpretations of the situation, interpret meaning from these realities, and apply my knowledge and experiences in the discussion of the findings.

Limitations

Teaching is a complex profession and teacher leadership systems are just as complex. Teachers make instructional decisions considering more than the collaborative efforts and suggestions of their peers, such as student achievement data, individual student needs, community and family cultures, and political pressures. Although very important, effective implementation of teacher leadership systems rely on more than just the communication of the purpose of the teacher leaders from administrators. Training for teachers and leaders alike, funding, school culture, and administrative support are also essential. This study is meant to illuminate one aspect of the implementation of a system of teacher leadership (the philosophies of teacher leadership and the resultant coherence of roles) and one factor that may influence teachers’ instructional decisions (engagement with instructional teacher leaders). It would behoove an implementation team to consider the structure of the teacher leadership system,
school culture, and the needs of the teachers and students holistically before making any major changes to their systems.

Contextual specificity such as school size, location, and demographics of the student and teacher populations can affect the transferability of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Teacher leadership systems are complex and are specifically designed according to the needs of the teachers, administrators, and students in a specific school. This study examined a school which may not be like others. Additionally, not all teachers or teacher leaders in the school are represented in this study. The understandings and decisions of these participants are unique to them. Another variable to consider when researching a specific system is the amount of time a school district has been utilizing a system of teacher leadership. Over time, the system is likely to change as teachers and administrators learn and adapt to shifts in culture and instruction. This case study will take place in a rural K–12 school district in Minnesota and is bound by the context and time at which it is conducted (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary

This chapter addressed the situation of educational reform in a global context, including professional development needs, the urgency and complexity of change, and provided rationales for the reason teacher leadership is necessary. Teacher leadership is evolving and complex. Role theory was described as the theoretical framework in which issues surrounding the role of teacher leadership will be investigated including the degree of coherence as to the function of the roles, the impact of the context or culture in which the teacher leadership system is situated, and the ability of teachers to interact with teacher leaders.

While teacher leadership may be necessary, the construct of the system is very contextual. The problem is that even with the teacher leadership system being built upon
perceived needs of the institution, the viewpoints of teacher leadership may vary depending on
the person and their position, beliefs, and history. The coherence of the perspectives of teachers,
principals, and teacher leaders may influence the teacher’s receptiveness to and their actual
instructional changes. Teachers may interpret the teacher leadership system as a driver of top
down mandates, or one of collaborative professionalism. The purpose of this study was to find
out how teacher leaders impact the instructional changes of the teachers, based on the degree of
alignment of the vision and of purposes of teacher leaders. Knowledge of perceptions will inform
all parties how to better align systems and thinking for better outcomes. A case study based on
one rural school will be used to illuminate this relationship.

The subsequent chapters will provide greater detail regarding the research literature,
methods, and findings of this study. In Chapter 2, the literature surrounding teacher leadership,
role theory, and organizational development will be discussed in greater detail. Chapter 3
includes a discussion of the methodology and constructs of this case study including information
regarding the participants and interviews. Chapter 4 includes a discussion of the analysis of the
data and findings, and Chapter 5 includes a discussion of these findings, provides conclusions,
and discusses implications for educational leaders and future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Teaching methodologies and whole philosophies of education need to shift as pressures
for improved student academic and social emotional outcomes increase. Systems of teacher
leadership are on the rise as a response from both teachers and administrators to help one another
make sense of the needs of the students and improve practice. However, the outcomes of these
systems of teacher leadership are mixed. Some researchers reported positive results including
increased professional growth for teachers and leaders and more collaborative cultures, yet some researchers reported issues of counterproductive egalitarianism and stagnation. One factor that could produce this difference is the way in which principals, teacher leaders, and teachers understand the function of teacher leadership and are able to arrive at a coherent view of the roles of teacher leaders. Misunderstandings, conflicting beliefs, and different underpinning philosophies regarding teacher leadership may be a significant barrier to increased professional growth and presumably increased student achievement.

This literature review will first provide an orientation to research methods employed to describe the breadth and depth of topics I searched surrounding teacher leadership. First, role theory will be described as the theoretical framework that permeates this study and provides a lens through which to view teacher leadership. Next, the evolving function of teacher leadership will be discussed and will be defined for the purposes of this study. An overview of the benefits and drawbacks of teacher leadership and structures that promote or inhibit teacher leadership will provide context to delve deeply into how teacher leadership roles are shaped and understood through the lens of each actor: the principal, the teacher leader, and the teacher. Common themes and conclusions will be drawn from the literature in regard to the purpose of this study. A critique of the qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches and rigor of the studies included in his literature review will be discussed, and finally a summary of key concepts presented thus far will be provided.

**Methods of Searching**

This study began by researching teacher leadership with the idea that teacher leadership is a means of educational reform. The initial quest was to survey what has currently been studied and discovered in these two areas. As a starting point, the University of Minnesota’s Livingston
Lord Library services was used to search EBSCOhost and utilize a broad array of databases including Academic Research Complete, Academic Research Primer, Business Source Primer, EBSCO megaFILE, Education Research Complete, ERIC, Professional Development Collection, APA Psyc Articles, APA Psych Info, SocINDEX, and Teacher Reference Center. Search terms included teacher leader*, instructional coach*, professional learning community, change in education, educational leadership, education reform. Precursors were then added such as “impact of”, “perspectives of”, “perceptions of”, or “roles of”.

As the focus narrowed, keywords were used such as school culture, ecology of education, micropolitics in education, distributed leadership, and transformational leadership. Theoretical orientations were explored using keywords such as educational psychology, sociology in education, motivation, social identity theory, attribution theory, sensemaking, role theory, structural functionalism, and symbolic interactionism.

As empirical and professional articles and books were collected and the references were scoured for frequently referenced authors, articles, and books, as well as those that hadn’t been previously considered. Those particular articles or books were located and acquired through the interlibrary loan system. Google Scholar and Research Gate were searched using authors’ names to find more articles by these researchers.

**Theoretical Orientation for the Study**

Prompted by York-Barr and Duke’s (2004) initial review of the literature and their claim that the research concerning teacher leadership was largely “ atheoretical,” Wenner and Campbell (2017) reviewed the literature again and found 27 different theories used in various studies (p. 149). This was not surprising as teacher leadership is a complex field of study. The purpose of this study centered around investigating the shared vision and expectations of teacher leadership
among key actors in a school setting: the principals, teacher leaders themselves, and classroom teachers. Furthermore, this study investigated the significance of the consensus surrounding teacher leadership and whether or not the consensus (or lack there-of) affected teachers’ willingness to interact with and be influenced by teacher leaders. Ontologically, this study adhered to the interpretivist paradigm, or the belief in multiple realities constructed through experiences and interactions that must be socially negotiated (Briggs et al., 2012, p. 21). Clearly, this study aligned with interpretivism as roles and sensemaking were investigated through multiple perspectives.

This study was grounded in the work of Biddle (1979; 1989), Katz and Kahn (1978), and Turner (2002) to develop an overview of role theory and provide a framework for the analysis of data. Epistemologically, structural functionalism and symbolic interactionism are two frameworks in which to approach sociology and were considered and contrasted heavily in the literature concerning role theory. At one point, Turner (2002) appraised critiques of traditional symbolic interactionism and symbolic interactionism and suggested merging them into a combined structural symbolic interactionist frame (pp. 212–226). Ultimately, Turner (2002) leaned on “an interactional theory, which assumed that roles are continuously being made in relation to relevant other roles” (p. 236). The description of role theory is organized by the development and enactment of roles, role conflict, and resolution. Biddle’s (1979) definitions are used as they offer a succinct overview and underscore the complexities of role theory. These definitions are consistent with the work of Katz and Kahn (1978) and Turner (2002).

**Development of Roles**

According to Biddle (1979), the concept of role was highly useful because it offers a means of studying both the individual and the collectivity within a single conceptual framework,
integrating anthropology, sociology, and psychology into a single discipline whose concern was the study of human behaviors. The flexibility of role theory allowed researchers to differentiate and discuss individual behaviors, social activities, and the phenomenal processes that lie behind the behaviors (pp. 11–13). Role theory provided social scientists insight as to why a role is organized the way it is and how this role integrates with other roles in a social system (p. 70).

Biddle (1979) defined role theory as, “a science concerned with the study of behaviors that are characteristic of persons within contexts and various processes, that presumably produce, explain, or are affected by those behaviors” (p. 4) and listed five propositions upon which role theory is based:

- Role theorists asserted that some behaviors are patterned and are characteristic of persons within contexts (i.e., form roles).
- Roles are often associated with sets of persons who share a common identity.
- Persons are often aware of goals, and to some extent goals are governed by the fact of their awareness (i.e., by expectations).
- Roles persist, in part, because of their consequences (functions) and because they are often embedded within larger social systems.
- Persons must be taught roles (i.e., must be socialized) and may find either joy or sorrow in the performances thereof. (p. 8)

The term role is the “behavioral repertoire characteristic of a person or a position; a set of standards, descriptions, norms, or concepts held for the behaviors of a person or social position” (Biddle, 1979, p. 9). Role theory dissects mental models held for a particular role and connects the underpinning phenomenon attributed to these mental models from various fields of study:
Persons carry in their minds some sort of hypothetical constructs that accounts for and predicts their behavior. The psychologist might say that those who perform similarly holds similar motives. The anthropologist might say that they share a symbolic culture. The sociologist might say they have a common definition of the situation. The role theorist says they “share expectations” for their own behavior and that of others. (Biddle, 1979, p. 115)

It is integral to understand how roles and expectations for them are developed and reinforced. Biddle (1979) explained that roles are embedded in social systems and organizations and are associated with social positions. The uniqueness of roles derives from comparing it with a counter role (i.e., teacher compared to student) (p. 6) and are subject to time, setting, activity, and sequences of prior events (p. 69). Roles are designed to have an effect or function (p. 6). Persons who share roles have a common identity, often exhibiting similar behaviors (p. 5). Conceptions of roles are learned through personal experience, observation of others’ characteristics, exposure to others’ messages (role sending and receiving), role-playing, and role-taking or walking in another’s shoes (p. 13).

Biddle (1979) went on to explain that roles are enforced through shared expectations for the role’s behavior. Those in the role exhibit these behaviors because they have learned the expectations, or others have enforced appropriate behaviors for the role through sanctions, an appeal to cathexis (feelings, values, and desires), or rewards (p. 5). Roles are further reinforced through role casting, the process in which one actor displays behaviors prompting the other to reciprocate expected behaviors (i.e. sports players responding to a coach’s commands) (p. 63). Role integration occurs when roles fit together, existing in harmony (p. 77).
Role Conflict

Frustration is thought to be the manifestation of unmet expectations, whether these are overt or covert expectations. Biddle (1979; 1989), Katz and Kahn (1978), and Turner (2001) each addressed role conflict and iterated similar themes: Role overload is when a person is required to do two or more things that cannot all be done. Intra-role conflict happens when a person belongs to a single position for which others simply hold different expectations whereas inter-role conflict or functional inconsistency is when the person is simultaneously a member of two roles or subsystems for which distinct expectations are held. Role ambiguity in when there is a lack of a clear foundation for defining the position. Additionally, role conflict can manifest if a person is asked to perform in a way that is inconsistent with his or needs or values; because of a lack of skill, underutilization of skills; or incongruence between expectations and personal characteristics. Furthermore, logical inconsistency can manifest when a person both wants and hates something (i.e., wanting to be recognized for skills, but I not liking being put in the spotlight) (Biddle, 1979, p. 202).

Other factors regarding the degree of role conflict are determined by the variables of expectations placed upon the role including: contextualization (the time and place), legitimacy (justification or “correctness” of the behaviors associated with the role), breadth (the many facets of a role), formalization (depth of indoctrination into society, or institutionalization), stereotypy (accuracy), and saliency (importance) (Biddle, 1979). Turner further (2001) addressed roles as being attentive to the task and to the social emotional well-being of the group. Turner concluded that when group members have a strong commitment to group goals there is little need for a separate expressive leader (p. 238).

Resolution
Biddle (1979) posed this question: “To what extent, then, are we authors or the victims of our social systems?” He responded, “We are both authors and victims, both sculptors and clay” (p. 277). How actors respond to role conflict, whether they are in the role or juxtaposed, depends on the degree to which an expectation is essential in the person’s self-concept, the degree to which the expectation is embedded in a belief or value system, the degree to which the expectation is internalized, and the degree to which the sanctions and rewards are tolerated (Biddle, 1979, p. 158). These conditions are the manifestations of one’s own experiences, the interactions with others, and orientations to change and thus awaken some motivational force.

As roles are embedded in social systems, persons need to consider to what extent members of the subject population agree or disagree in the expectations they hold, if expectations are bounded by contexts, and if they are associated with certain functions (Biddle, 1979, p. 216). This degree of consensus and knowledge generated by the subject population is further influenced by the cohesiveness of the group including the number of participants, their physical propinquity, and the age of the group in terms of number of hours members have interacted or the frequency with which the group has assembled (Biddle, 1979, p. 234). Biddle (1979) further asserted,

The more group members interact, presumably, the more accurate their beliefs about one another will be, the more likely they are to develop a sense of identification with the group, the firmer will be their shared norms for group members, the more they will like one another and just like outsiders, and so on. Identification with the group, collective commitment to the tasks taken on by the group, positive cathexis for group members, a sense of collective identity or “we-feeling,” and various other factors reflect cohesiveness. (p. 235)
Biddle (1979, pp. 72, 154–157) drew further scrutiny to shared expectations by discerning whether expectations may be held uniquely by a single person or may be shared among a subject population, their legitimacy (the extent to which an expectation is viewed as a “right and proper” by members of the social system), and the functions of roles (between those expressed by the formal organization, or the informal group expectations). Members within the same group may be unaware that they share or hold differing expectations or are unaware of the degree of consensus (p. 192).

The course of action, resolution, or resultant behaviors can be thought of as a prescription. Prescriptions for the self are assumed to be self-motivating. To order a prescription for another is evidence for attempted influence (Biddle, 1979, p. 127). The prescriber has often been called a leader, whether he or she is a designated self-leader, or a leader given explicit responsibility for setting rules, tasks, and other structural features of the system. Leaders must also be aware that systems have homeostatic mechanisms that defend the system against those who attempt to change it (p. 318). Biddle summarized six orientations change leaders might assume (p. 278–279), organized into Table 1 to be succinct.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Should we want others to follow our wishes...</th>
<th>The biggest obstacle to social change is...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normative</td>
<td>Behaviors are right or wrong.</td>
<td>We must convince the other that the behavior called for is morally right, and present practices are wrong.</td>
<td>Disagreement of opinions of right and wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional</td>
<td>Role expectations are not prescriptions for action, but rationalizations of behavior patterns already set by necessity.</td>
<td>It is necessary to place the other within a context that constrains the behavior we are looking for.</td>
<td>Anything we attempt to alter has consequences that disturb the equilibrium of other elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>People’s understandings are limited to their own immediate situations; thus misunderstanding, deception and mal-integration are normal features of organization.</td>
<td>It is necessary to show the other that it is in his or her own interest or perhaps our collective interest to do so.</td>
<td>Participants cannot conceive of another way of organizing behaviors that would be an improvement on the present system, and were they presented with it, they would accept the change proposed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange</td>
<td>Individuals contribute to the social system and receive things they value.</td>
<td>We convince the other that sanctions will follow depending on his or her conformity.</td>
<td>Finding appropriate exchanges and maintaining balance so the other remains engaged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict/power</td>
<td>Social systems are built upon resource procurement.</td>
<td>We dictate and leave no other alternative.</td>
<td>It is unlikely unless one makes the status quo an unpleasant condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathetic</td>
<td>It is not necessary to use force, moralization, or understanding to obtain conformity. Conformity results most painlessly from cathexes (desires, values, as in propaganda, brain washing).</td>
<td>If we can control the preferential processes in others, we will achieve their conformity because they will “want” to do what we have planned them to want to do.</td>
<td>Feelings, values, desires, and preferences can be obscure or misinterpreted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organizational systems operate under an authority structure, with two institutionalized roles, that of leader and follower. Organizations tend to close the gaps in authority structures by limiting the number of authority figures and numbers of followers in the span of control. Often, leaders define the tasks, craft roles, and impose expectations, and followers in those roles perform accordingly, receiving rewards for their accomplishments. Organizations are inherently operationalized based on power and control, sanctions, and conformity. Despite this brief
depiction of an organization, organizations are also social systems and are manned by individuals who have their own needs and definitions of the situation (Biddle, 1979; Katz & Kahn, 1978).

Furthermore, Turner (2001) emphasized problems with role transition as persons move throughout the system, opening the doors for role conflict as members must negotiate internal and external pressures. Moreover, if the transition is a part of role making, the involved parties must negotiate the need for the role and engage in role differentiation via an examination of counter roles, contexts, and expectations. This process brings to light the interactionist nature of role theory rather than the structuralist depiction of an actor reading from a predetermined script (Turner, 2001, p. 235).

Conformity, though prevalent in role theory, is not the end goal of role theory. Role conflicts may be resolved by changing the behavioral expectations for the role, negotiating the context, acquiring the skills or knowledge to perform, changing one’s beliefs or attitudes, or removing one’s self from the situation. Biddle (1989) asserted that, “Social systems must evolve in order to survive in a changing world, and evolution requires the programming of nonconformity” (p. 82). Nonconformity, creativity, and the questioning of traditional expectations may lead to social growth (p. 79). Biddle (1979) asserted that autonomy must be provided for employees if they are to solve the shifting, daily problems of their jobs (p. 324). Autonomy may come in the form of nonconformity.

Role theory was used in a wide variety of contexts and supported with empirical research focusing on different aspects of the theory (Rizzo et al., 1970). It is closely linked with social identity theory (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Stryker, 2002; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The application of role theory to the field of education was mentioned by each Biddle (1979), Katz and Kahn (1978), and Turner (2002) and used in studies such as Hart’s (1994) study of the
implementation of teacher leadership roles. The empirical studies in this literature review related to several different facets of role theory.

Summary

The study of teacher leadership and change is complex. Researchers need a flexible and widely used theory such as role theory to provide a framework to begin understanding the intricacies of educational reform, interpersonal behavior, and conceptualizations of self and motivation. The definition of a role is a pattern of behavior exhibited for a position in a social context. Roles serve a function and are learned through self-experience and social interactions including role sending, role receiving, role playing, and role taking. Roles are enacted by one’s own and other’s mental models and expectations of the role and are enforced through rewards and sanctions of many formats. Role conflict happens when incompatible expectations are placed on the actor and distress ensues. The way in which role conflicts are resolved depends on the legitimacy of the expectations, degree of consensus, context of the role, coherence of the groups involved, salience of expectations, tolerance for sanctions or rewards, and the actor’s orientation toward change.

While organizations are fraught with power and authority structures, compliance is not the only desired outcome of role conflict. Innovation and change are necessary for human survival and with it comes new needs, contexts, and roles with functions and expectations to address those needs. Roles with greater autonomy are necessary in organizations such as schools that require significant local decision making to deal with the complexities of everyday work.

Role theory permeates this study by providing context for the research questions, literature review, methodological approach, and data analysis. In the next section, the review of the literature, role theory will be incorporated into the problems of practice found in the literature
on teacher leadership and parallels will be drawn to other theories that complement the facets of role theory and teacher leadership.

**Review of Literature**

**Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to understand how principals, teacher leaders, and teachers understand the role of the teacher leader, and investigate the significance of this coherence from these three perspectives via teachers’ abilities to change their practice. It is not enough to study the individual actor’s responses to and impacts on teacher leadership, one must consider all of the reports collectively to understand how teacher leadership is understood in a particular school.

The definition of teacher leadership is discussed in this chapter which will give background knowledge as to the complexity of this study. An overview of the benefits and drawbacks of teacher leadership will be provided. From this overview, the interconnected roles and perspectives of the principal, teacher leader, and teachers will be untangled and their contributions and barriers to a coherent understanding of the role of a teacher leader and their impact on and responses to the culture surrounding teacher leadership will be reported. The research will then be synthesized, the qualitative approach to this study justified, and a critique of previous research methods used in the literature will be provided.

**Defining the Role of Teacher Leader**

Teacher leadership is not a new concept, but it has evolved over the past four decades. Silva et al. (2000) identified 3 waves of teacher leadership beginning with the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* as a pivotal point for teacher leadership. In the early 1980’s, teacher leaders were primarily designated by administration and given managerial roles such as department chair. The primary duties of teacher leaders were to better manage the educational system. The
second wave came during the mid to late 1980s. Instructional leadership positions such as curriculum director, mentor, or lead teacher were developed to capitalize on the expertise of classroom teachers. The third wave, from the late 1980’s through today, is characterized by positions requiring teachers to change the culture of the school, foster collaboration, and reflection. Roles include professional learning community facilitator or instructional coach.

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009, p. 133) drew a parallel between the evolution of school reform and professional development as a scaffold for the development teacher leadership. On one hand, reform efforts moved from required curriculum, to mandates, to shared decision making, to performance outcomes, and now standards. On the other hand, professional development delivery methods moved from workshops and outside experts, to developing the organization, to learning communities and job-embedded learning including models for coaching. As teacher leadership moved from one phase to another, districts and teachers may not have replaced one model with the next, but rather layered the models. This is both positive and negative as differentiated professional development is needed but could send confusing messages to teachers and teacher leaders as to their roles and purposes in the school, especially for veteran teachers who may have experienced many of these waves of change (Coquyt & Creasman, 2017; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

The focus of this study centered around teacher leaders as formal instructional leaders who are generally compensated in time and/or money for their services, however there are more roles in which the broader term teacher leader applies and are too many to list. Researchers have not agreed upon the definition of teacher leader as the roles and expectations are so vast. After surveying the literature, York-Barr and Duke (2004) determined that the term teacher leader is “an umbrella term that includes a wide variety of work at multiple levels in educational systems
including work with students, colleagues, and administrators and work that is focused on instructional, professional, and organizational development” (p. 288). York-Barr and Duke further expand upon this definition by stating that teacher leadership is a “process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals and other members of social communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning achievement” (pp. 287–288).

Harris and Mujis (2004) derived four dimensions of teacher leaders including being a broker of ideas and effective practices to others, being a participative leader by developing and owning new strategies, being a mediator by using their knowledge of the craft to help interpret improvement plans, and forging close relationships with other teachers (p. 23–24). Angelle and Dehart (2010) developed the Teacher Leadership Inventory and sorted teacher leaders into five categories: educational role model, decision maker, visionary, designee, and supra-practitioner. In 2011, the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium released the Teacher Leader Model Standards to further clarify the definition and purposes of teacher leaders around seven domains. Briefly, these domains are: (I) fostering a collaborative culture; (II) using research to improve practice; (III) promoting professional learning; (IV) facilitating improvements in instruction; (V) promoting the use of assessments and data for improvement; (IV) improving collaboration with families and community; and (VII) advocating for student learning and the profession.

In addition to attempting to encapsulate the roles and expectations of teacher leaders in one definition, teacher leadership may manifest in informal and formal roles (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015; National Institute for Excellence in Teaching [NIET], 2018). Two approaches to teacher leadership are organic (informal) and appointed or voted-in (formal). Researchers such as Fairman and Mackenzie (2015) and Szczesiul and Huizenga (2015) ascertained that all
teachers can be and are leaders, and furthermore, an organic, grass roots, movement for change is best. Teacher leadership flourishes in settings with high trust between colleagues and teachers and is optional. Danielson (2006) heralded this type of informal leadership as “the highest level of professionalism” (p. 1). Marzano (Learning Sciences International, 2017) seemed to concur that informal leadership is best, but that it should not be optional as shown in his Focused Teacher Evaluation Model. An element in Marzano’s model on which teachers are scored is “Promoting Teacher Leadership and Collaboration”, and in order to achieve the highest rating of “Innovating” on some competencies, teachers must “help others by sharing evidence” of the competency’s implementation. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) pointed out that impactful and widespread informal teacher leadership relied on healthy school cultures, of which there are few, so the likelihood of voluntary informal teacher leadership resulting in widespread systemic change is minimal. Teacher leaders appointed and developed by administration benefit from the support of the principal, specific training, unique learning and leading opportunities otherwise unavailable to them, and sometimes compensation. The problems with formal positions are primarily the phenomenon of egalitarianism among teachers, and if left on their own, lack of specific training, unclear roles, and time to work with colleagues (Coquyt & Creasman, 2017; NIET, 2018).

In a report from NIET (2018), a superintendent put it bluntly, “The teacher leadership movement… has an identity crisis” (NIET, 2018, p. 10). The report further attempted to classify teacher leaders into a spectrum of five categories of teacher leadership from formal to informal. Briefly, The spectrum included roles that were formal (middle level positions with compensation, training, and professional accountability and authority); quasi-formal (roles in which teachers are viewed as experts, incorporated into the formal structure, but do not have
improvised (opportunities for leadership with support and training, but do not change the organizational structure); organic (making an effort to improve education within and beyond the school in informal self-directed ways); and consultative (having a say in school wide decisions that impact classroom teaching) (p. 10). The NIET report went on to support a formal hybrid teacher leader approach in which teacher leaders have release time for their assigned leadership duties, and also remain in the classroom. However, during initial implementation, caution is to be warranted,

Let’s be clear: Involving teacher leaders in the formal evaluation of their peers, even if only through observation and feedback, offers a serious challenge to the status quo and can prompt a host of concerns. However, based on decades of experience, NIET and its state, system, charter and school partners have found those concerns to be unwarranted. (NIET, 2018, p. 18)

For the purposes of this study, Katzenmeyer and Moller’s (2009) definition of teacher leadership will be used: “Our definition is teachers [sic] leaders lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; influence others toward improved educational practice; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership” (p. 6.). This study focused on formal teacher leaders, specifically instructional coaches and professional learning community (PLC) leaders that have been appointed or voted into roles by their peers. This determination narrowed down the vast scope of teacher leadership roles, giving specificity to the actions, behaviors, and contexts of the roles.

**Outcomes of Teacher Leadership**

Researchers have reported both positive and negative outcomes of teacher leadership, citing the structures that contributed to success and obstacles standing in the way of achieving
desired outcomes. Benefits included increased teacher participation in and ownership of change initiatives which led to a decrease in resistance to change; increased expertise in pedagogy and curriculum, increased individual and collective efficacy; increased morale and collaborative cultures; and increased sustainability through opportunities for advancement and recognition resulting in increased teacher retention. (Barth, 2001; Fullan, 2008; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Teacher leadership structures that promote positive outcomes for teachers and students included role clarity, the presence of a previously established trusting and collaborative culture; skilled teacher leaders; supportive principals; teacher leaders who lead beside other teachers rather than attempt to establish power over them; sufficient time to collaborate with teachers; compensation; and the positive leadership and interpersonal traits of the teacher leaders (Barth, 1999; Knight, 2018; Senge et al., 2012; York-Barr & Duke, 2004.)

Increased instructional leadership and professional development were just two of the prevailing purposes for teacher leadership. York-Barr and Duke (2004) also pointed to the need to attract and retain teachers in the profession, giving them room to grow and ownership of classroom practices and educational reform. Teacher leaders themselves benefit as teacher leaders learn to lead and examine instruction, other teachers benefit from shared practices and reflection, and students benefit when teachers collaborate to implement best practices. Another rationale for teacher leadership was to maximize the return on the investment of teacher professional development. A study performed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2014) estimated that a combination between US federal, state, and local spending on teacher professional development is as high as $18 billion annually. States are increasingly recognizing teacher leadership and developing policies for state-wide implementation (Barnett, 2019).
Increasing the number managerial positions in an organization is costly (Katz & Kahn, 1978). As stewards of their budgets, administrators have an obligation to find the most effective ways of spending financial capital (Sorenson & Goldsmith, 2013).

Along with the positive outcomes that demonstrated the effectiveness of teacher leadership, negative outcomes were cited and included increased stress for the teacher leaders; power struggles and distrust between teacher leaders and administrators, and teacher leaders and teachers resulting in ruined relationships; confusion regarding improvement initiatives; wasted resources including human and financial capital; and students being deprived of quality instruction from talented teachers (ASCD, 2014; Bosso, 2017; Kraft et al., 2018; Mangin, 2005; Margolis, 2012).

The barriers to teacher leadership that contributed to these symptoms included many of those opposite of the positive structures: lack of time; lack of principal support; lack of training; role confusion and ambiguity; and egalitarian cultures fraught with mistrust. Additional dimensions included conflicting philosophies and beliefs; lack of communication regarding goals, policies, and procedures; top-down mandates; and teachers’ seniority and autonomy (Blase, & Blase, 2000; Fullan, 2008; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015; Liethwood et al., 2007).

**Perspectives and Structures of Teacher Leadership**

Three roles, the teacher, teacher leader, and principal are mentioned throughout the prior discussion of benefits and drawbacks, and structures and obstacles to teacher leadership. The roles are clearly intertwined as researchers who focused on the relationship between any two of these roles could not help but recognize and mention the importance and impact of the other.
Anderson (2004, pp. 98–100) described this phenomenon of leadership reciprocity as a result of his study of six schools with varied teacher leader constructs in Canada (See Figure 4). Anderson derived three relationships between the three roles. The buffered relationship was depicted as three concentric circles in which the principal is in the center circle, teacher leaders are in the middle level and others on the outer circle. Teacher leaders are often in formal roles, are few, are close to the principal, and serve as buffer between the principal and teachers.

Decision making was centralized to the principal and teacher leaders (Anderson, 2000, p. 98). In the interactive relationship, all three circles shifted to the bottom and share a common anchor point. It was characterized by a wider distribution of decision making with all teachers, more informal leaders, and a highly visible principal (Anderson, 2000, p. 99). Finally, contested relationships were depicted as teachers and teacher leaders inside one circle, and the principal in a separate circle outside of the group. In this relationship, teacher leaders attempt to undermine the decision making of the principal, the principal did not recognize the need for teacher leader support, and a high amount of conflict was present (p. 100). These models capture the essence of tight and loose coupling which connotes the degree to of responsiveness between elements in a system (Hopkins et al., 2014).

Figure 4

Anderson’s (2004) Leadership Reciprocity Models
To illustrate this point of social interaction and the impact of teacher leadership, Hopkins et al. (2014) conducted a three-year study in one school district in which they issued a survey to teachers before and after restructuring their leadership system with teacher leaders trained in new mathematic curriculum and pedagogy. The teachers were asked to name those they sought for advice about math. After mapping the responses and noticing a significant increase in connections to these teacher leaders, it became clear that teacher leaders were integral to advice giving and support for the implementation of the initiative. The interactive nature of role theory was underscored in these studies.

However, what do principals, teacher leaders, and teachers expect from teacher leaders, and are these expectations what is perceived through teacher leaders’ behavior? Kiranli (2013)
administered *The Questionnaire of Expectations and Perceptions on Teacher Leadership Roles* to 173 teachers and 22 administrators. Kiranli (2013) found that among the categories of institutional development, professional development, and collaboration with colleagues, administrators had the highest expectations and perceptions of teacher leadership roles and teachers the lowest. This study illustrated the discrepancy between what is expected and what is perceived differs between positions.

In the next section, each of the three roles are reviewed in turn to not only untangle their impacts on the teacher leadership system, but to explore potential perspectives about, and expectations for, the role of the teacher leader. The expectations these actors have upon the role of the teacher leader affect the behaviors of not only the person cast into the role of teacher leader, and the principal to some degree, but of particular interest, the teachers who work with the teacher leader.

**The Influence of Principals**

Leadership is second only to the classroom teachers in impacting student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004). Leaders are the architects that help to build the infrastructures upon which systems thrive (Senge, 2006, p. 321). Starting from concrete measures to more complex and abstract, principals shape the context for teacher leaders by allocating resources (time, financial support, and materials); fostering the skills of the teacher leader; setting expectations and goals role of the teacher leader position and seeing they are understood (coherence); and creating conditions and setting expectations for the rest of the staff to interact with teacher leader (culture). These steps are crucial to place the teacher leader in an appropriate context in the social setting of the school.
Principals must provide or point teacher leaders to professional development for their leadership positions in order to build professional capacity for leadership and change (Fairman et al., 2009). Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) asserted that “we cannot ask teachers to assume leadership roles without any preparation or coaching, simply because they intuitively know how to work with their colleagues” (p. 44). Furthermore, teachers may exhibit exemplary pedagogical skills, but this does not mean they are versed in issues of andragogy and coaching skills (Knight, 2011, 2018; Knowles, 1978). Moreover, teacher leaders may lack a framework and understanding of change, how to deal with conflict, and the complexity of embedded systems, to properly plan and assess change efforts (Cooper et al., 2016, p. 89; Dozier, 2007). In response to this need, Coquyt and Creasman (2017) provided a guide to walk teacher leaders and administrators through the growth process of a teacher leader in a personalized and encouraging manner. Imperative to growth is reflection, both individually and as a group of leaders (Harris & Muijs, 2003). Principals may have to develop their own skills to cultivate leaders (Sterrett & Irizarry, 2015).

Aside from interacting with teacher leaders to help them become more effective at meeting expectations, principals must attend to two critical aspects of the larger educational system, fostering coherence around the system of teacher leadership, and shaping a collaborative learning culture necessary for teacher leadership to thrive.

**Developing Role Coherence**

Principals will need to prepare teacher leaders and guide them to understand the function of the role and meet the expectations. However, what expectations are to be placed upon the teacher leader role and how are these expectations understood by all those who interact with teacher leaders? It is imperative administrators contemplate the purpose and role of teacher
leadership, how it will be communicated to the staff, and envision its place within the larger system (Coquyt & Creasman, 2017; Hallinger & Heck, 2001, 2003; Hart, 1994; Torrance & Humes, 2015; p. 805; Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2015; Lumpkin et al., 2014; Uribe-Florez et al., 2014; Weiner, 2011; Wolfin & Rigby, 2017). It is unlikely that the principal will provide meaningful support if there is no clear link between the district goals and the function of the teacher leader (Weiner, 2011). Liethwood et al. (2007) provided a spectrum of the alignment of roles, vision, and behaviors according to the amount, timing, and nature (or lack thereof) of the planning process: planful alignment, spontaneous alignment, spontaneous misalignment, and anarchic misalignment. Planful and spontaneous alignment are most desired in which the people, goals, expectations, and tasks have been to some degree synchronized.

Fairman et al. (2009) interviewed 61 consulting teachers (instructional coaches) from seven large districts in five states implementing a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program. In the PAR Program, consulting teachers were trained to use a set of teaching practice standards to look for evidence of effective teaching and learning as the coach identified teachers needing assistance. Fairman et al. (2009) found when the implementation of system was deliberate, transparent, relied on a set of teaching standards, and teachers returned to the classroom after serving as a consulting teacher, teachers and teacher leaders themselves were clear what the expectations were for the teacher leadership system. Furthermore, the teacher leaders were given authority to evaluate their peers and give critical feedback as the assessment and report of these teachers would be considered in their case for tenure or dismissal.

The issues at hand are of role making (Turner, 2002) and coherence (Fullan, 2016). First, during the actual act of writing the job description one cannot possibly capture the many facets
and nuances of a role that is complex and diffuse (Turner, 2002; Biddle, 1979). The function of the teacher leadership role needs to be articulated. When attempting to define teacher leadership, it is often the function of the role that is described. Smylie and Denny (1990) found the district in their study intentionally left open the specific roles and responsibilities of teacher leadership in order to uphold their commitment to teacher decision making and professional discretion in a local context. However, general aims were shared with the teacher leaders, such as being a resource for other teachers and administrators, planning and leading professional development activities, leading curriculum and instruction, serving as a link between teachers and administrators, and included the parameter that the teacher leaders would remain in the classroom, not given release time (Smylie & Denny, 1990; p. 240). The results of the surveys given to teachers and teacher leaders revealed teacher leaders were uncertain how their colleagues and principals understood their purpose. This confusion was confirmed as teachers referred to the teacher leaders as administrators, supervisors, and evaluators, none of which were in the original functional description (Smylie & Denny, 1990, p. 251).

The function of the teacher leader role may align with district goals, improvement initiatives, and with other roles in the building, but as Fullan (2018) stated, alignment is on paper. The Teacher Leader Model Standards (2011) are a starting point (Creasman & Coquyt, 2016), however how will people relate to, or behave as a result of this new role? Fullan (2009) suggested coherence, more than alignment should be sought and defined coherence as the “shared depth of understanding about the purpose and nature of the work” (p. 1).

The importance of creating a shared vision for teaching and learning was undeniable in the literature surrounding leadership and change (Barth, 1991; Biddle, 1979; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Buller, 2015; DuFour et al., 2016; Fullan, 2016; Guenert & Whitaker, 2005; Katzenmeyer
The message from the literature is clear: The more the stakeholders are involved in a visioning process, the more they will take ownership of the system and outcomes. The person cast into the role of teacher leader will surely experience role transition, role making, and role conflict. Other persons will also need to re-examine their roles, personal beliefs and philosophies, through the process of role differentiation. Actors’ behaviors and resultant outcomes of teacher leadership systems will be guided by the shared saliency and legitimacy of the expectations and purpose derived from the vision, along with the degree of cohesiveness of the group (Biddle, 1979; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Turner 2002). Senge (2006) summarized this notion by asserting, “It’s not what the vision is, it’s what the vision does” (p. 143).

Role differentiation has been noted as a key struggle for principals, teachers, and teacher leaders alike leading to role confusion and unclear lines of authority (Coquyt & Creasman, 2017). Traditional expectations pertaining particularly to the role of the principal include evaluator and giver of feedback, professional development provider, curriculum director, and instructional leader, not to mention provider of strategic direction, collaborator with other agencies, operations, and driver of accountability (Fullan, 2008). The introduction of a teacher leader role requires the principal to take on a distributed or democratic leadership philosophy in which power is shared, not merely delegated (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Spillane, 1999). In a distributed leadership model, leadership is not limited to a particular role, rather leadership is stretched over the system, and those that are best equipped, skilled, or positioned to lead do so (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016; Spillane, 2006). However, principals and teachers in schools
steeped in hierarchy may struggle with the concept and need time and dialogue to enact such a system.

Fear of losing power or not trusting teacher leaders inhibits principals’ willingness to support teacher leaders, leading principals to step in and under or take over the work of teacher leaders (Barth, 1991, Senge, 2006, p. 104). As Fitzgerald and Gunter (2008) stated, “leadership may be distributed in schools, but we seriously question whether power has been similarly distributed” (p. 332). Principals may find that their power is multiplied as they become leaders of teams (Hallinger & Heck, 2013).

The principal’s work in coherence building is never done. As the needs of teachers, administrators, teacher leaders, and students change, the vision and expectations must continually be revisited and strengthened or modified (Liethwood & Strauss, 2010). Included are instances of onboarding as new teachers come into the building (Hart, 1994). Fullan (2018) suggested that coherence is not achieved during staff meetings, but during the interactions between people every day, in the hallways and informal settings, as they engage in sensemaking regarding their own values and beliefs and their relationships with each other. As Turner (2002) explained, shifting roles and expectations are typical of a reciprocal, interactionist society. In order to deal with constant change, whether it be from internal and external pressures, a principal must develop a learning culture.

**Developing Culture to Support Role Enactment**

A principal may have developed a shared purpose and expectations for the role of teacher leader and is ready to help develop those that assume this role, however if teachers are not receptive to collaboration, feedback, deep learning, new ideas, or harbor distrust and blame, then persons in these leadership roles will struggle. These ideas are characteristic of a negative school
culture. According to Gruenert and Whitaker (2015), “Culture is essentially a social indoctrination of unwritten rules that people learn as they try to fit in a particular group” (p. 2). Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) went on to suggest that to improve your school culture, you must dig deep into the psyche of your organization and figure out why certain actions or attitudes are entrenched. Often, such actions or attitudes are actually rewarded by a school's culture, so any desirable new behaviors will need to be rewarded by the culture as well if they are to be sustained. (p. 2)

A school’s culture may impede the coherence building process, diminish the ability for all the stakeholders to understand the role of the teacher leader, and thus diminish the ability for the teacher leader to fulfill expectations. Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) stressed the importance of culture when they quoted the business management guru Paul Dreker saying, “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” Building a safe, collaborative, learning culture is first order of business for those seeking to enhance teaching and learning (Fullan, 2011; Harris, 2003).

A positive culture is not free from conflict. Liethwood and Beatty (2009) suggested that sometimes leaders create and surface conflict to destabilize organizations that are resistant to change and use such opportunities to create new realities together (p. 100). Liethwood and Strauss (2010) explained that schools will shift through three stages: declining performance, crisis stabilization, and sustaining and improving performance on their road to establishing a culture of learning in which true discourse is honored and conflict is viewed as a learning opportunity (Fullan, 2015; Knight, 2018; Senge; 2006; Scott, 2002).

A number of drivers of negative reactions to change may manifest during reform efforts including the use of sanctions to produce fear of failure, excessive use of external motivators, work overload, lack of autonomy, exclusion, incongruence with beliefs or mental models,
implementation fatigue, the lack of the initiative’s relevance, distrust or misplaced blame (Biddle 1979; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Turner, 2002). Several theorists from psychology, sociology, education, and leadership have studied the intricacies of influence, motivation, and change to answer why these behaviors persist. Principals need to utilize their theories to address culture issues and frame change. Among the theories cited in the literature regarding teacher leadership are: self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), attribution theory (Weiner, 2010), social-cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989), adult learning theory (Knowles, 1978), zones of enactment and distributed leadership (Spillane, 1999; 2006), social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and role theory (Biddle, 1979; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Turner, 2002). A brief explanation of a few key theories in relation to leadership theories will reinforce the need for a shared, collaborative learning culture, and the place role theory have in such a culture.

In self-determination theory, Ryan and Deci (2000; 2017) assumed all humans have basic psychological needs: competence, or to feel confident and effective (consistent with Bandura’s (1989) social-cognitive theory); relatedness or to be cared for, to care for, and belonging (consistent with Tajfel and Turner’s (1979) social identity theory), and autonomy (consistent with Knowles’ (1978) adult learning theory. From these assumptions, Ryan and Deci (2000) identified two types of motivation, autonomous and controlled. People operate under autonomous motivation when they feel a “full sense of willingness, volition, and choice,” and are doing something for their interest, enjoyment, and personal value. People operate under controlled motivation in order to get some reward, to avoid punishment, are feeling pressured, demanded, or obliged. Deci (2017) observed that when people are operating under autonomous motivation, their performance, engagement, and wellness is greater.

Ryan and Deci identified two types of autonomous motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic.
Intrinsic is not a surprise, but extrinsic motivation is usually a part of controlled motivation. However, the extrinsic motivator can be internalized. If a person can come to understand the value of the idea and then integrate it with their own values and beliefs, it can then become an intrinsic motivator (Deci, 2017). This is consistent with Biddle’s (1979) summary of the cathexis orientation, or an attempt to control the other’s values and preferences.

Weiner’s (2010) attribution theory illuminated the locus of control people may attribute to their decisions. Weiner’s (2010) process of reflective examination gave a glimpse of where people placed blame (on themselves or an outside entity) based on personal beliefs, experiences, if they felt they can control or the situation or not (locus of control), and whether or not things will change in the future (stability). The perceived cause (attribution) is more important in this model than the actual cause (Jones, 2014; Weiner, 2010). Furthermore, and most importantly, Weiner applied these causal dimensions to behavior consequences for the individual and examined the likely behavior of others based on these outcomes. It is this inherent prediction and justification of one’s own behavior and decisions that link attribution theory to the willingness of teachers to engage and be influenced by teacher leaders. Most recently, Carol Dweck (2018) explained how Weiner’s (2010) attribution theory is the basis for her idea of growth mindset.

Finally, Biddle (1979), Katz and Kahn (1978), and Turner (2002) discussed role theory and fully supported the definition of culture as a pattern of behaviors internalized by the group such that those behaviors become the norm and are expected. Actors in a system will encourage conformity to these expectations. In terms of implementing teacher leadership as a formal role and the subsequent impacts on culture, Turner (2002) asserted that “Functionally, formal roles are incomplete and vague with respect to details of the role performance and fail to take account of changes in significant alter roles. It is likely to look to peers for consensus on how to proceed”
Furthermore, Turner defined six factors that determine whether role change is successful:

1) whether there appears to be a realistically achievable role pattern whose benefit – cost ration is more favorable than the old pattern; 2) the extent of structural autonomy for the role setting, and the extent of freedom from close observation, or the weakening of normative controls over role performance; 3) the extent to which role incumbents are unified in their desire for role change and mobilized to promote change; 4) the extent to which there is mobilized “client” demand for the services this role provides or would provide under a new pattern; 5) the cultural credibility of the new role pattern; and 6) success in gaining institutional support for the new pattern including in many cases legal and judicial action. (p. 252)

Teacher leaders would need to make appropriate changes in behavior and attitude (internal) and teachers and administrators must change their behavior and attitudes toward the teacher leader (external). These behavior changes must be made in concert in order for the teacher leader to no longer be viewed in the old role (Turner, 2002, p. 250). These role changes and transitions affect not only the one changing, but those around them, resulting in a possible change in culture.

Here is where leadership theory is to be melded with the theories of learning and psychology. Marion and Gonzales (2013) explained that postmodern critical theorists such as Senge and Foucault observed the pushback of workers as leaders attempted to impose direction and marshal mandates, resulting in covert leadership actions. “Modern managers and leaders seek to achieve control without appearing to do so” (Marion & Gonzales, 2013, p. 295). Control can be implemented through surveillance, and the best form of surveillance is that which we project on ourselves, using the group to change the group (Fullan, 2011; Marion & Gonzales,
This idea is the nature of diffusion of innovations wherein once a tipping point is reached, lagging groups will be more likely to buy-into the change (Senge, 2006). By utilizing models such as total quality management, employees are empowered to take ownership of their work by giving them authority and autonomy to appeal to their moral imperatives (Marion & Gonzales, 2013; Fullan, 2011; 2016). The theory of using peers to drive change was also reflected in Spillane’s (1999) Zones of Enactment framework in which he found teachers who engaged with peers to make sense of new ideas were more likely to adopt them into practice.

Change theorists consistently agreed that the more one pushes for change, the more there will be resistance (Biddle, 1979; Fullan, 2011, 2016; Knight, 2011; Marion & Gonzales, 2013; Senge, 2006). A top down model of change may work temporarily but may further damage the culture. Furthermore, if teachers feel that the role of a teacher leader is merely a conduit for top down mandates, then resistance will ensue (Hart, 1994). Teacher evaluation systems and high-stakes testing promote the sanctioning of teachers and schools (Barth, 1991, 2013; Cohen et al., 2017; Fullan, 2008, 2011).

Tajfel and Turner’s (1979) social identity theory appeals to the sense of belonging. Akin to role theory, people belong to a group when they find similarities in behaviors or other characteristics. However, Tajfel and Turner (1979) asserted that the sense for belonging is so strong that the mere mention of belonging to a group (even if the group is fictitious) causes one to show preference for their “in-group”. Furthermore, the more time spent examining the in-group, the more the out group becomes different. Moreover, over time, the members of the outgroup become more indistinguishable from the perspective of the ingroup members. This theory forms a basis for the “us versus them” mentality between employees and administration.
Fullan (2011) called for a social context for support and belonging during a time of change through collaboration and reflection for all groups.

**Summary**

The principal’s foundational philosophy and vision for teacher leadership makes a difference in the way the system will respond (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Principals not only set the expectations for the role of the teacher leader, but the expectations as to how teachers should interact with teacher leaders. Should principals use teacher leaders as an extension of an evaluation system, or to enforce a top-down mandate, resulting in a micromanaging nightmare, then issues of egalitarianism and distrust will manifest (Fullan, 2011; Senge, 2006; Senge et al., 2012).

However, if principals adopt the role of lead learner by encouraging collaborative problem solving, innovation, risk taking, team building, and ownership, then the groundwork may be laid for teacher leaders to work alongside teachers in a safe and productive manner (Coquyt, 2019, p. xi). The rationale or philosophy needs to be articulated, shared, and refined by all stakeholders, but often starts with the principal. This work of shared and collaborative culture building is critical as culture will trump a strategy or program every time (Coquyt, 2019; Fullan, 2008; Barth, 1991).

What remained was to apply a pragmatic approach and investigate current underpinning philosophies and expectations of those that create the teacher leadership systems, versus the perceptions of teachers and teacher leaders. This coherence, or lack-thereof, impacts the overall effectiveness of the system, specifically the ability for teachers to interact with and learn with teacher leaders. As Deci (2017) recommended, the more leaders can attend to the psychological
needs of their workers, and create conditions that foster autonomous motivation, the more productive the worker.

**Reflections of Teacher Leaders Upon Their Roles**

Teacher leadership systems are directly impacted by the thoroughness of the preparation work done by principals. This work includes building a collaborative learning culture, building coherence around the purpose and expectations of the teacher leader role, and skills development. Not all these conditions need to exist in their entirety before a teacher leader takes on a leadership role as teacher leaders are often put in positions to help change the culture of the building, or pilot and shape expectations for teacher leadership positions (Cooper et al., 2015; Wolfin & Rigby, 2017). Nonetheless, the degree to which these conditions are in place effects teacher leader’s levels of confusion, stress, and behaviors toward others.

**Teacher Leaders’ Responses to Role Coherence**

Role conflict in terms of role ambiguity (lack of a foundation for the purpose of the role), inter- and intra- role conflict, and role overload could be seen as the opposite of coherence. On the journey to role clarity, teacher leaders need to engage with both teachers and principals in continual dialogue in role differentiation, including what the role is and is not. To illustrate this point, Reay et al. (2006) followed the process of implementing nurse practitioners into the healthcare system in Alberta, Canada. Reay et al. followed this process over four years, conducting interviews with nurse practitioners, managers, collecting documents, and observing meetings. They found that nurses themselves utilized microprocesses to legitimize and differentiate their roles by discussing with physicians, clients, and other nurses about the parameters and expectations of their role. One finding was the nurse practitioners had to describe what they were not. They were not physicians; they were not above other nurses; nor were they
clinical nurse specialists (in charge of education and consultation of healthcare teams). They were simply finding ways to be better nurses by studying medicine and addressing patient needs. This same process had to happen in the legislature to write the role of the nurse practitioner into accepted medical practice. A similar process of negotiating roles was described throughout the case studies in teacher leadership literature.

Weiner (2011) studied four trained teacher leaders and their principals in a large district on the east coast. Two teacher leaders reported greater efficacy in their roles when their principals clearly defined the goals and responsibilities of the role and connected the role to the school’s reform initiative. The two teacher leaders who felt ineffective, experiencing difficulty getting teachers to come to them, had two principals who could not clearly define the goals and responsibilities of the teacher leader and could not clearly link the positions to school reform efforts.

Angelle and Schmid (2007) interviewed 14 principals and 51 teachers whom principals perceived as leaders, across a combination of 11 elementary, middle, and high schools. Angelle and Schmid found teachers perceived teacher leaders differently depending on the grade levels taught. In the elementary, teacher leaders were perceived as representatives to the administrator for their teams, bringing concerns to the forefront and taking information back to the team. In the middle schools, the leader was defined by the quality of relationships with others in the school and the community. Teacher leaders in the high school were identified by their superior classroom skills and those whose lives centered around things beyond the classroom such as clubs, sports, and the community (Angelle & Schmid, 2007, pp. 792–793).

Teacher leaders also reported feeling overwhelmed (role overload) or confused when role expectations were ambiguous and duties other than coaching teachers were involved (Margolis,
2014; Mckenzie & Locke, 2014). Bagley and Margolis (2018) summarized coherence best when they said:

Without attention to the nuances of what is involved in allowing teacher leaders to both teach and lead – without working over-time, burning out, or leaving due to other factors – teacher leadership will remain stuck in a nebulous zone of “we know this is important, but we’re not sure how to monetize it, value it, or structure it. (p. 41)

Teacher Leaders’ Responses to a Culture of Support for Teacher Leader Roles

According to interviews form 59 National and State Teachers of the Year (NSTOYs), and 3 finalists from 26 states, these teacher leaders viewed their role as promoting collaboration and reflection, connecting research and practice, modeling, and risk taking (Jacques, et al. 2016). One such Teacher of the Year commented that it’s “just being able to share what you know with others and help them grow” (p. 19). Teacher leaders seem to care for their students and each other, wanting everyone to succeed, including themselves. Modeling was cited as the most effective way to learn new practices, not just effective lessons, but how taking risks and making mistakes can lead to continuous improvement. The NSTOYs said that by observing, they could look for and emulate the best in others, but also modify effective practices to fit their preferred teaching style. They concluded that there was not just one correct way to teach. By being recognized as a teacher leader, NSTOYs felt they were given the status to try new and innovative instructional approaches without the fear of being deemed ineffective. These sentiments are indicators of a collaborative learning culture, conducive to teacher leadership and growth.

Margolis and Doring (2012) came to the same conclusions about culture after studying six hybrid teacher leaders over two years in four different districts in the state of Washington. The leaders were to teach in model classrooms where other teachers could see them teach in a
live setting. Margolis and Doring asserted there needed to be more respect for the learning process of teachers, that rarely does anyone get it right the first time, and mistakes are the key to learning. Furthermore, leaders need to reframe their idea of a learning culture claiming that too much emphasis on implementing already packaged “best practices” reduces opportunities for teachers to expand their pedagogical intelligence.

Dismantle the search for the holy grail of the perfect lesson. Reward teachers for reflection rather than perfection. Documenting and analyzing mistakes and successes correlates with teacher and student learning more than the importation and transmitting of “best practices.” Teacher leader is the best “teacher learner.” (Margolis and Doring, 2012, p. 874)

A collaborative, learning culture is impeded by the most prevalent issue in the literature on teacher leadership, egalitarianism. Smylie and Denny (1990) bluntly stated, “Teachers have been viewed both as a source of our problems and a key to their solution” (p. 235). On one hand, while unions are undeniably important for the protection of worker’s rights, on the other hand Weiner (2011) noted, “Since the establishment of collective bargaining, every teacher in the system as equal rights and stature, only distinguished by the years of service and hours of graduate credit” (p. 11). Furthermore, the evaluation of peers is not in the job description of the teacher, rather this responsibility lies with an administrator. Efforts of peers to interact with and help each other have been viewed as evaluation. The institutionalized expectations for the role of teachers has been limited and caused great frustration in the implementation of teacher leadership.

Drawing on the symbolic interactionist side of role theory, one issue may lie in the term “teacher leader” itself. Harris (2003) directly asked the question, “If teachers were to be leaders,
who would follow?” The role of follower suggests the leader has access to sanctions or will in some way compel the other to comply to an expectation, thus contributing to some hierarchy. According to most contracts, teachers are equal, not leaders or followers of one another. The term leader has been reserved for the role of an administrator. Fairman and Mackenzie (2015) contemplated this dilemma as well and concluded that the term “teacher leader” should be abandoned all together.

Herein lies the nexus of culture, coherence, and role theory. In order to achieve coherence regarding the unique role of a teacher leader (role differentiation), the patterns of behavior (culture) of holding all teachers to the same expectations, assigning the expectation of feedback only to the administrator, maintaining privacy in classrooms, and guarding autonomy, does not allow room for the differentiation of roles. Intra-role conflict emerges when a person is simultaneously in two roles for which there are different expectations for each role (Biddle, 1979). Until the role of teacher leader can be clarified and legitimized by stakeholders, intra-role conflict may ensue.

Struyve et al. (2014) researched teacher leaders’ coping strategies, or periods of role transition, by interviewing 26 teacher leaders, each from a different school in Flanders. Teacher leaders felt as though they lost their colleagues since assuming leadership responsibilities. The teacher leaders struggled with obtaining recognition and collaboration from their colleagues but received explicit legitimacy from the school leaders such as praise and being entrusted with confidential information. On one hand, teacher leaders want to be recognized for their skills and use these to lead other teachers to better practices, but they do not want to risk their relationships with teachers. Teacher leaders utilized micropolitical strategies such as framing their role as a teacher taking on more tasks rather than being in a new position with a different function. Thus,
some maintained their role as teachers who just have different role responsibilities (Struyve, et al., 2014, p. 233). One teacher leader justified her position by stating, “in the end, I’m still one of the teacher-colleagues but who only spends more time participating in thinking about school level processes” (Struyve et al., 2014, p. 244).

Brosky (2011) distributed the *Political Skills Inventory and Influence Subscales* to 149 teacher leaders to study the micropolitical skills teachers used during interactions with teachers. Bosky concluded that of the six primary political skills, integration (positive mood setting), exchange strategies (implied promises), rationality, assertiveness (confrontation), upward appeal (referring to the chain of command), and the use of their coalitions, teacher leaders consistently avoided assertiveness, upward appeal, coalitions, and exchanges rather using integration and rationality as their primary political strategies.

Teacher leaders continually downplayed their skills to maintain the status quo. Smylie and Denny (2004) surveyed 13 teacher leaders and 56 teachers regarding perceptions of teacher leadership and concluded that teacher leaders “seem reluctant to challenge the norms of equality, privacy, and autonomy among teachers and the authority and power of the school administration. They seem very careful not to alienate themselves from their fellow teachers” (p. 254).

Similarly, Mangin (2005) conducted a study to examine how teacher leaders cope with issues of teacher resistance. Using a data sub-set from a previous study, Mangin examined the interviews and observation data of 12 elementary math teacher leaders from low socio-economic districts in New Jersey. All 12 of the teacher leaders reported resistance to working with their colleagues including the failure of administrators to introduce the teacher leaders, provide support, or set expectations, contributing to the teacher’s perception of the teacher leader as an insider or outsider. All teacher leaders in Mangin’s study put forth efforts to appear
nonthreatening by making an effort to minimize their status as experts or taking on a helping role such as doing photocopying. Most importantly, the teacher leaders reported a positive, nonthreatening, trusting relationship was needed to be established between themselves and the teachers they worked with first, and noticed relationship building takes time.

McKenzie and Locke (2014) concluded that giving feedback was the greatest difficulty for the teacher leader in their study. McKenzie and Locke observed six teacher leaders (three being released full time and three half time from teaching), once per month for an academic year. The teacher leaders associated constructive feedback as conflict when confronting another teacher regarding the need to change and improve practices. Teacher leaders felt resentment from their colleagues and became frustrated with the lack of follow through from these colleagues.

Donaldson et al. (2008) distinguished between reform and non-reform roles of teacher leaders in their study of 20 formal teacher leaders across a variety of districts. Reform roles are those in which teacher leaders tend to tell other teachers what to do and have administrative connotations attached to them. Examples of reform roles included math or literacy coaches or curriculum coordinator. Non-reform roles are those in which there was no formal authority assigned to change teacher practice, such as cooperating teacher, special education coordinator, union vice president, or mentor coordinator. Only those in reform roles experienced resistance from staff in this study. Donaldson, et al. noticed some reform teacher leaders made efforts to change their roles to non-reform roles because of surmounting conflict and what teachers felt was infringement on their autonomy in the classroom. “Teachers have to contend with resistance from colleagues that was rooted in norms of autonomy, egalitarianism, and seniority, but in their actions they, themselves, reinforced those norms” (Donaldson et al., 2008, p. 1106).
The codependent effects of role coherence and culture is apparent in systems of teacher leadership. In his book, Coquyt (2019) described the first-year experiences of five teacher leaders and their transitions from a teacher to a teacher leader. Coquyt reported the now teacher leaders felt a lack of guidance in their roles as principals did not give them concrete job responsibilities. When looking for affirmation in their new positions, it was scarce as there was no evaluation or goal system created. Furthermore, the new teacher leaders experienced power struggles, trust issues, and frustration with other teachers, leading to one’s return to the classroom after the first year. Even though it was demanding and stressful, the other four did find rewards in their own professional growth and that of others that were willing to cooperate.

Coquyt asserted that teacher leadership must be part of the school’s vision and implored principals to define roles and provide training and feedback. He also asserted that the principal must support a culture of learning, be the sole evaluator, and deal with the unwilling. Finally, throughout the book, Coquyt gave sound advice to new teacher leaders: empower yourself to learn about the culture and the role, understand changing relationships, demonstrate belonging, set goals, reflect, and take care of one’s self to deal with the stressful position. Coquyt’s work was a detailed example highlighting teacher leadership from the viewpoints of the teacher leaders, combining role coherence and culture.

It is important to note that not all studies resulted in unchanged teaching practices, nor do all teacher leaders have overall negative experiences in teacher leadership. Struyve et al. (2014) and Fairman and Mackenzie (2015) found that overall, teacher leaders reported their experiences as positive as they grew as individuals in their practice and were able to assist many teachers as well. However, these teachers went with the cadre of the willing, were in environments in which a more supportive learning culture was already established, and formed positive relationships
with the principal and teachers (Cooper et al., 2015; Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015; Kraft et al., 2018; Struyve et al., 2014).

**Summary**

Teacher leaders are shaped by a multitude of systems including others on their leadership teams, their individual professional development experiences, their personal orientations toward teacher leadership and those of their colleagues, and external factors such as the geographic and demographic contexts of their schools (Cooper et al., 2015). However, it is evident that the behaviors of principals and other teachers influence how teacher leaders perceive their roles. The issue of egalitarianism prevailed in cultures that were not mature in practices of shared learning and problem solving, collaboration, risk taking, and growth. On one hand, teacher leaders reported they wanted to be recognized for their skills, help other teachers in their practice, and appeal to their own moral imperatives to foster student success. However, teacher leaders downplayed their skills and expertise, gave up helping certain teachers, and became frustrated at the lack of improved student outcomes in the face of egalitarianism (Mangin, 2014). Teacher leaders felt resentment, hostility, and mistrust from some teachers who perceived that the bar had been raised for professional practice (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015, p. 71; Liethwood & Beatty, 2009). It is suggested that teacher leaders maintain their stance as teachers and not administrators (Coquyt & Creasman, 2017).

The question remains to investigate how teacher leaders view the function of their own roles. Are they frustrated with lack of student achievement and view themselves as experts who need to fix other teachers’ poor teaching or enlighten them on best practices? Are they the fidelity police charged with seeing a specific program or mandate through (Fullan, 2018)? Are they reflection partners who equally learn and share ideas with other teachers (Knight, 2017) or
something entirely different? These are the perceptions this study hopes to address. Furthermore, this study aims to find out if teachers and principals share these views and how these views affect the ability of teachers to work with other teacher leaders.

**Reflection of Teachers on Teacher Leadership**

People who assume the role of teacher leader were once filling the role of teacher. Turner (2002) pointed out that a person and his or her social organization retains a memory of the person in his or her previous role. The expectations (old and new) others impose upon an individual in a new role may weigh heavily on the success of the individual’s ability to meet the expectations of the role.

Smylie and Denny (1990) stated,

> Teachers themselves may be one of the biggest barriers…of educational reform. Caught in social and normative contradictions concerning teacher’s work with students, administrators, and other teachers, efforts to professionalize teaching through job redesign and organizational restructuring may be rejected or compromised by the very group these efforts are intended to serve. (p. 257)

This section explores teacher’s expectations and perceived barriers of the role of teacher leaders.

**Teachers’ Responses to Role Coherence**

When few people have a concrete idea for the responsibilities of teacher leaders, people will form their own conceptualizations of what it ought to be (Biddle, 1979; Smylie & Denny, 1990). Teachers reported teacher leaders spent a disproportionate amount of time working with administrators and not enough time working with teachers, and therefore associated the teacher leader role with administration more than the role of a teacher (Margolis & Doring, 2013). To further exacerbate the role confusion between teacher leaders and teachers, lines of power and
authority are obscured leading to mistrust and a breach of egalitarian norms among teachers. For these reasons, researchers conclude teacher leaders are not to be viewed as administrators, and to select those that have no current desire to pursue administration (Coquyt, 2019; Creasman & Coquyt, 2016; Knight, 2011).

Teachers leaders can act as broker of ideas and initiatives, allowing a wider range of solutions to meet particular needs. The role of a teacher leader as broker is especially important in content specific coaching and situations in which coaching is mandatory (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). In these instances, teacher leaders can adopt a language that focuses on student learning as opposed to instructional compliance to build trust and focus (Donohoo et al., 2018).

Whether observations were mandatory or not, teachers like having practices modeled, but did not like being visited in return (Mangin & Doring, 2012). Furthermore, if coaches became associated with evaluation, teachers resisted engaging in coaching and were less likely to seek out support from coaches on instructional matters (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017).

The principal, teachers, and teacher leaders need to continually meet to build coherence around the function of a teacher leader including goals and expectations for working with the teacher leader to reduce role conflict and ambiguity (Murillo, 2013). This coherence building can have a direct impact on the culture in which the teacher leader will operate.

**Teachers’ Responses to a Culture of Support for Teacher Leader Roles**

Teachers may perceive the well-meaning intentions of teacher leaders as infringements upon their autonomy, judgements on their professional practice, and worse, betrayal. Like teacher leaders, teachers need to have a supportive culture to take risks. Teachers have been found to resist efforts from peers to be coached for fear of exposure of their deficiencies (Mangin, 2005; Margolis & Doring, 2013). Moreover, teachers feared their deficiencies would
be exploited directly to administration. Weiner (2011) found that teachers positioned teacher leaders in a higher hierarchical position because of their access to more confidential information and their frequency of meeting with the school leaders. Suspicion ensued, leaving teachers to wonder to what extent the teacher leader was still “one of them”. Furthermore, teachers held back ideas during meetings for fear the teacher leader would pass on information to the school leader.

Bosso (2017) quoted a State Teacher of the Year, who related this fear explicitly:

We’ve created a system where teachers are afraid to fail, they’re afraid to try something new and have it blow up in their face and so that’s a big piece of that culture of, ‘we have to be perfect everyday,’ and that’s just not fair, that’s not right. (p. 16)

When a culture of collegial collaboration around professional development initiatives were built and supported in the school, teachers were more willing to ask for help, admit difficulties, and come out of their silos in order to see what others are doing (Blase & Blase, 2000; Leithwood et al., 2007; Snipes, 2017). Expectations, behaviors, leadership and teaching practices, and mental models will need to be examined and sometimes challenged in order to grow (Biddle, 1979; Fullan, 2016; Harris & Spillane, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2007; Senge, 2006). Some teachers chose not to take on leadership because they resisted confronting difficult issues that may bring conflict (Flood & Angelle, 2017).

Second order change that shakes the foundation, beliefs, philosophies, and institutionalized roles of actors in education is often more difficult to undertake than first order change, or changes in routines (Marzano et al., 2005). Change is associated with loss, which can cause feelings of anxiety, failure, and frustration (Bosso, 2017; Heifitz & Linsky; 2004). People need to be motivated to make a change by determining if the outcome and loss of current reality
is worth the new reality and determine if they have the skills necessary to navigate the change (Bandura, 1989). Self and collective efficacy are the beliefs a person or group of people have about their capabilities to produce desired levels of performance and organize courses of action to achieve their desired level of attainment (Flood & Angelle, 2017). Snipes (2017) found that teachers who worked closely with mentors and had frequent interactions had a higher sense of self efficacy than did those who did not work on as closely with their mentors.

The saliency of the expectations imposed upon teachers will affect teachers’ willingness change their behaviors. To impose a uniform approach to professional development, and further mandate it is detrimental to a teacher’s need for autonomy (Bosso, 2017; Jacobs et al., 2018). Schools are complex thinking organizations dealing with sometimes unpredictable human behaviors. As such, teachers need autonomy to make the best choices to address the student needs in front of them. Teachers often confuse autonomy and isolation. However, as Fullan (2018) stated, autonomy is individual freedom, not isolation: the teacher is free to bring their ideas to the group, learn from the group’s ideas, and bring back to their practice what the teacher feels is needed to serve the students.

Achinstein (2002) discovered the impact of micropolitics in teacher communities including conflict (goal diversity, lack of consensus, and critical reflection skills), border politics (negotiating which people and ideas belong), and ideologies (shared values and perspectives); and the impacts on school reform initiatives and school culture. The accounts of the two schools in his study illuminated how teachers’ approaches to and strengths of school conflicts, border politics, and ideologies affected the status quo. School A’s teachers were close knit (had close border politics), resisted examining their teaching practices and displaced blame (conflict avoidant), and perceived the function of schools as socially stabilizing (ideology), therefore,
social justice reform was not implemented. School B’s teachers experienced turnover and were very diverse (loose border politics); signed an agreement stating all students can learn, and failure to do so will result in teachers’ examination of practices (open to conflict); and school was viewed as a vehicle for social justice issues (ideology). Therefore, high amounts of conflict resulted in constant reform. Low conflict settings are not conducive to generating new ideas, and teachers situated as leaders were met with a great deal of conflict. A learning culture must be established for teachers, not only teacher leaders, to grapple with new ideas, initiatives, and challenges from students.

Flood and Angelle (2017) administered the Teacher Leadership Inventory, the Omnibus T-Scale, and the Teacher Efficacy Belief Scale – Collective Form to 443 teachers across 25 schools. Seventy-one percent of the respondents did not hold a leadership role. From these surveys, collective efficacy, working in a collaborative group, and trust in the principal produced the largest, statistically significant variance in scores, suggesting these are the most influential factors attributing to teacher leadership. Teachers need to network to make sense of reform efforts and establish patterns of accepted behavior, and teacher leaders are hubs of network connections (Louis et al., 2013; Shillingstad et al., 2015). Smith et al. (2016) found teachers networked with teacher leaders even after their formal status was removed. Spillane (1999) delineated six zones of enactment in which teachers made sense of and operationalized the ideas advanced by reformers: policy sector, professional sector, pupils, public, private, and personal. Spillane (1999) placed these zones on a spectrum from individual to social interactions and concluded that the teachers who engaged in more social zones were able to make sense of reform efforts and operationalize them in their teaching.

Summary
Teachers want to be recognized, valued, validated, and be involved in decision making for the school and their classrooms. However, as soon as one among them is recognized as a leader by choice or being appointed, that teacher is considered to have broken the ranks. They are shunned or sanctioned, and because of their now “special relationship” with the principal are called spies, pets, and worse. These feelings are exacerbated if the teacher leader is seen as a member of the principal’s “inner circle” or is being groomed for a position in administration (Angelle & Hart, 2011). Principals and teachers may not agree upon the selection criteria of teacher leaders, as underhanded or hidden motives may emerge in a distrusting culture (Harris et al. 2007).

Teachers fiercely upheld the notion of egalitarianism, coupled with seniority, and become resistant to efforts from teacher leaders in some instances. The lack of a coherence and culture of learning in the school further enabled teachers to resist collaboration efforts with teacher leaders. Conversely, if a those within a school are working toward a culture of learning, teachers may view teacher leaders as coaches, or confidants, and engage in examining their practice in a safe and supported manner. Teachers came to understand the role of the teacher leader through a process of building coherence between principals, teacher leaders, and other teachers. This begs the question: How do teachers perceive teacher leaders in a particular school? Furthermore, does this understanding impact their willingness to engage in reflective practice with teacher leaders? These are the questions this study aimed to answer.

**Synthesis of the Research Findings**

The use of role theory as a framework for this study had its benefits and drawbacks. Biddle (1979, 2001) discussed these openly in his work to promote the (at the time) young field of role theory. One primary benefit to using role theory was it offered a common lens through
which many branches of study could come together. Role theory draws largely upon both sociologic and psychologic perspectives as roles are both formed by society or the organization in which they are found and are enacted through the behaviors resulting from the minds of the role holders. Humans engage in patterns of behavior that are similar to those with whom they share identities, but at times can exhibit behavior different than the collective norm. Role theory provided a framework to understand these patterns. Finally, role theory is methodologically neutral in that it does not corner the researcher into specific forms of qualitative or quantitative approaches. Role theory is also complemented by, and compliments, other theories found in psychology and sociology including social identity theory, theories of motivation (though motivation cannot be honed down to one’s obligation to fulfill his or her role), theories of change, and leadership theories.

Role theory is broad in scope allowing it to be applied to many fields, most popularly education and clinicians. However, critics of role theory concerned with the lack of parameters are concerned about superfluous assumptions. Furthermore, role theory is multifaceted, encompassing topics from conformity, socialization, role development, and role conflict and resolution, making the indexing and referencing of studies and themes a large task. Role theory can only describe what happened in a situation and possibly the likelihood of individual or social change, but not necessarily which way the change will go (Biddle, 1979, p. 346). Finally, like qualitative analysis, role theory is limited in its ability to produce generalizable assumptions because of its confinement to context (Biddle, 1979, p. 342).

The definition of teacher leadership was ambiguous throughout literature (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). This was not surprising as teacher leadership is context specific and is at times difficult for those within the system to define. The quest for the best model of teacher leadership
is futile, however, as social roles must change to move systems forward (Biddle, 1979). When discussing best practices and innovation, Dylan Wiliams (ResearchED, 2017) stated, “Everything works somewhere, but not everything works everywhere.” The context and people involved in the process make it successful (Buckingham, 2015). However, leaders can work toward coherence and efficiency within their systems (Fullan, 2016). Bagley and Margolis (2018) suggested the field of education needs more models of teacher leadership to study, modify, implement, and further scrutinize through evaluation. Furthermore, the conditions do not have to be just right to start as success is built along the way, and shared.

Coherence is crucial to a system’s effectiveness. Every person in a role of principal, teacher leader, or teacher may view the function, goals, and expectations of teacher leadership differently from their others’ perspectives. A theme prevalent throughout the literature surrounding teacher leadership is that a shared vision of teaching and learning, and the roles that support the process of teaching and learning need to be developed with all stakeholders. If people do not know what to do or expect, they will turn toward each other or improvise (Turner, 2002).

The importance of principals’ expectations, underlying beliefs, level of involvement including the type and amount of support given to the teacher leaders, and ability to foster coherence among the staff is evident. Teachers may notice these attitudes and actions (or lack thereof) and treat and interact with the teacher leaders accordingly, for better or worse. The studies surrounding teacher leadership are often concerned with the interactions between two of the roles, however teacher leadership is comprised of a triadic relationship between teachers, teacher leaders, and principals, and needs to be researched as such. Furthermore, the work of coherence building is never finished as teachers are hired into the district, the needs of students shift, and the teachers and principals grow in leadership capacity and instructional practice.
The use of internal motivation and support to promote a culture of learning is also supported in the reports from researchers in this literature review. Researchers consistently reported growth of teachers’ practice when teachers were involved in distributed leadership practices; professional development was relevant to student needs and personal growth goals of the teacher; and reported egalitarianist behaviors when teachers felt threatened by outside mandates (outside meaning a peer, the principal, or an external organization). Knowles’ (1978) adult learning theory also supported this phenomenon. Leading experts in their fields such as Fullan (2016; 2018) in educational reform, Knight (2018) in peer coaching, Scott (2002) in leadership consultation, and Senge (2006; Senge et al., 2012) in organizational development all suggested that it is through dialogue (creating shared meaning), not debate and mandate (deciding a winner and loser) that a path will be cleared to shared investment and shared ownership. Through this path, similar to the cathectic orientation for change (Biddle, 1979), an organizations’ goals may begin to align with a participant’s personal goals, thus changing external motivation to intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

This study aimed to illustrate the significance of coherence in a system of teacher leadership. The current research suggested that, where systems of teacher leadership were present, teachers who exhibited more innovative teaching or professional growth were engaged with their peers in problem solving, and teachers who exhibited slower or a lack of growth were not as willing to work with teacher leaders. The reasons behind a teacher’s level of engagement with teacher leaders could be vast, but the concern of this study is how coherence between teachers, teacher leaders, and principals regarding the role of the teacher leader affects the willingness to engage with a teacher leader and implement new practices. Put simply, if teachers view teacher leaders as drivers of top down mandates from administration, then resistance will
ensue, however if teacher leaders are viewed as coaches or colleagues, acceptance and collaboration will be more likely.

Rather than perform statistical analyses via surveys, the researcher will analyze teachers’ explanations behind their growth, definitions of teacher leadership, and relative salience of teacher leaders. These reports were compared to those of the teacher leaders and principals to determine the level of coherence. Case studies such as this were frequent in the literature regarding teacher leadership. Role theory will give a framework from which to discuss the findings.

**Critique of Previous Research Methods**

The methodological approaches of the literature used for this study were both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative studies utilized surveys to understand perceptions of teacher leadership including distributed leadership, culture, self-efficacy, and networking. The statistical analysis seemed to be in line with the recommendations of Fraenkel et al. (2015) and were presented in a comprehensive and understandable manner for the reader. Surveys were valid and reliable, and the sources of the instruments were stated, especially when those instruments came from another branch of study such as the business sector (Angelle & DeHart, 2010; Brosky, 2011; Flood & Angelle, 2017; Murillo, 2011).

The benefit of surveys is that many more participants can be reached over multiple contexts such as location and grade level. The limitation is that the results from the statistical analysis will not be able to discover the reasons behind the answers given. Qualitative research gives insights into the antecedents, current realities, and other descriptive accounts of the phenomenon studied.
The qualitative studies reviewed primarily used a case study approach. According to York-Barr and Duke (2004) case studies have been the most popular method to study teacher leadership. A phenomenological approach was used in only a few studies. The sample sizes of these case studies varied from 6 to interviewing 65 participants and included teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators. Some case studies were one-time interviews, others were performed over the course of up to 4 years. These settings were mostly urban or suburban schools and varied over demographic and measures of student achievement. The timeline varied as to how long the participants were teacher leaders or how long the system of teacher leadership had been enacted. More often, when teacher leaders or the system was new, was it cited.

Most of the case studies focused on the interactions of only one pair of actors (ex: the teacher leaders and principal, or the teacher leader and teachers), but mentioned the missing actor in the discussion and findings. The accuracy of the assumptions drawn for the missing party are of question if no data were collected concerning them.

Data analysis seemed to also be in line with the teachings of Creswell and Poth (2018). The coding of data and finding of themes in interviews were most prevalent. Many studies reported collecting observation data and documents but did not rely on these as much as the interviews for the findings and discussion.

The benefits of case studies were the deep learning of how leadership systems work in one setting, from multiple perspectives, and over time. However, the limitation is that it is difficult to generalize the findings to other settings as each setting is unique in its student needs, goals, development of teachers, leadership ability, demographics, and longevity of teacher leadership initiatives.
The major limitations of the previous research were the inability to generalize to other settings as mostly large schools were utilized, and each study including different teacher leadership roles (math coach, literacy coach, generalist, PLC facilitator, mentor) based on local context. However, when looking across many studies several themes start to arise including role conflict and ambiguity, the importance of the principal in creating systemic coherence, and the pervasiveness of egalitarianism and culture. Some researchers reported positive outcomes in terms of increased growth as practitioners and a more collegial culture. Some researchers reported more consternation and lack of educational reform.

Focusing on the relationship of two actors at a time allows a researcher to focus on one aspect of the system. However, it is evident that the system of teacher leadership consists of intricately woven interactions between all three parties. This study advanced the rigor of the study of teacher leadership as it considered the viewpoints of more than one actor, and more than just a coupled relationship between two actors, rather a triadic relationship between all three actors. It is important to study teacher leadership as a practice, as opposed to a role in which several actors and their personal sense-making influence how teacher leadership takes place (Struyve et al., 2014). This study added the parameter of looking at a small, rural school that has been implementing a formal system of teacher leadership for over ten years.

**Summary**

The previous literature made it evident that principals, teacher leaders, and teachers impact the expectations, behaviors, and outcomes of teacher leadership. The perceptions of all parties (the principals, teacher leaders, and teachers) were shaped by previous coherence work, whether the work was limited, shared, or contrived only by administration. The way in which teacher leaders behave according to their perceived role expectations triggered a response from
the teachers, either engaging in reflective practice and growing professionally, or shutting down and remaining stagnant (Lattimer, 2007).

Teacher leadership is context specific. The definitions of teacher leadership throughout the literature reflected this. Teacher leadership is shaped by the particular student needs, leadership abilities and needs of the principal and teachers, and is continually shifting once implemented as all actors grapple with defining the expectations of the role. Furthermore, it is not enough to study the interactions between only two of the parties, or perceptions of only one of the parties as in previous studies. In order to understand teacher leadership in a specific school, a researcher must investigate the whole system and gain perceptions from various viewpoints. A qualitative case study will be the best means to gather data in the form of interviews and analyze the data. In the next section, the qualitative methodological approach for this study including the setting, participants, data collection, and data analysis methods is discussed.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The pressure for students to achieve more academically and socially has led principals, teachers, policy makers, and whole communities to debate practices in the realm of education. Facets of education in constant discussion include pedagogical practices to discern the best way for students to learn, what curriculum should be guaranteed and viable, and the best systems of leadership to manage reform efforts and inspire innovative practices (Marzano et al., 2005). States and school districts have formed systems of teacher leadership to help navigate this complex terrain, however the outcomes vary from producing collaborative professionalism to enabling stagnation perpetuated by egalitarian behaviors. One reason for the variation in
outcomes may be the ways in which each principal, teacher leader, and teacher views the role of the teacher leader, if this perception agrees with individual’s underlying philosophies, and how these perceptions align with each other.

This chapter will further define the purpose of the study and relate this purpose to the research design and case study methodology. The design of the study will be detailed including participant selection and the procedures for selecting and communicating with participants. Next, data collection procedures and instruments will be discussed. Initial data analysis methodologies for case studies will be defined as outlined by Merriam (1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Finally, ethical considerations concerning this study will be discussed.

**Purpose of the Study**

As described in Chapter 1 of this study (see pp. 3–11), the purpose of the study was to investigate the coherence of the roles of the current formal teacher leaders in one school from the perspectives of the principal, the teacher leaders themselves, and classroom teachers to address the first research question. This study also investigated how the presence or lack of a shared vision of instructional teacher leadership impacted the ability of teachers to engage with formal teacher leaders and utilize their suggestions for instructional change, addressing the second and third research questions.

This study addressed a gap in the literature surrounding teacher leadership. Few studies have investigated the coherence of underlying philosophies regarding a local system of teacher leadership from three critical perspectives, the principal, teacher leaders, and teachers in one study. Furthermore, few studies investigated how a lack or presence of coherence influenced the ability of teachers embrace change through engagement with formal instructional teacher leaders. This study illuminated a critical, ongoing step – the need for coherence (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).
Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) pointed out that examining one’s philosophies “may reveal areas of incongruence between individual teacher beliefs and values, and the operating assumptions of their schools” (p. 171). Biddle (1979), Katz and Kahn (1978), and Turner’s (2002) developments in role theory illustrated Katzenmeyer and Moller’s (2009) statement. The operating assumptions of the system of teacher leadership should be manifested in the roles enacted by the teacher leaders. However, the amount of agreement of the underlying philosophies surrounding the roles may affect how the roles are enacted, perceived, and what the outcomes of engaging with the roles will be.

In order to collect meaningful data concerning a complex system such as teacher leadership, a quantitative survey may reveal that differences exist and the degree of variance of those differences for a large number of participants, however, it does not allow individuals to detail their personal realities or reflect deeply to make their own connections. Rather, a qualitative case study comprised of interviews allows participants to divulge details, recount stories and events, and justify their philosophies. It is in these interviews the researcher may find kernels of data that reveal how and why teachers believe what they do, and consequently behave the way they do. This type of inquiry is based on the interpretive paradigm and exemplifies social constructivism, the foundations of a case study.

**Research Questions**

1. How do the rationales of teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators regarding teacher leadership in their school align?

2. How does the coherence of a system of leadership impact classroom teachers’ abilities to engage with formal teacher leaders?
3. How does the coherence of a system of leadership impact classroom teachers’ abilities to implement instructional changes?

**Research Design**

The design of this qualitative case study closely followed that of Merriam’s (1998) case study applications in education, and Merriam and Tisdell’s (2016) and Creswell and Poth’s (2018) parallel designs for qualitative research. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described the nature of qualitative research:

> Drawing from the philosophies of constructionism, phenomenology, and symbolic interactionism, qualitative researchers are interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences. The overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process …of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience. (p. 15)

Merriam and Tisdell (2016, pp. 16–18) specified five characteristics of qualitative research. First, qualitative researchers are concerned with understanding the phenomenon of interest from an emic (insider’s) rather than the etic (outsider’s) perspective. Second, the “researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (p. 16). Third, the analysis process is inductive toward the beginning, and shifts to deductive toward the end. Fourth, the design of a research study is particularistic in that it is responsive to conditions surrounding the case and data collected. Finally, the end product of qualitative research is richly descriptive, using words including direct quotations from participants, rather than numbers to illustrate the findings.
This study utilized the case study as the particular method of qualitative research. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) defined a case study as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 37). A bounded system is a particular phenomenon, event, situation, or program in the that is limited by the time it occurs, space or location, and by the number of people involved, rendering the findings relative to that case (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 96; Merriam and Tisdell, 1998, p. 27). Furthermore, case studies are heuristic in that they illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study. They can “bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader’s experience, or confirm what is known” (Merriam, 1998, p. 30).

Merriam (1998) discussed the disciplinary orientation of a case study. As described previously (see pp. 14–15 of this study), the design of this study followed the social constructivist paradigm. Creswell and Poth (2018) summarized social constructivism as the presence of “multiple realities constructed through our lived experiences and interactions with others” (p. 35). Researchers utilizing sociological case studies are interested in the constructs of society and socialization including features or attributes of social life. Social life can be interpreted “as a set of interactions, as common behavior patterns, or as structures” including the effects of roles (p. 37). As such, this study was a sociological case study (Merriam, 1998, p. 37).

Merriam (1998) and Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested it is the intent of case studies that set different case studies apart. Among several types of cases studies, the intent of this study was to be an instrumental study. Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 98) described an instrumental case study as one in which a real-world bounded case is selected to illustrate an issue or concern. This study illustrated the issue of coherence in a particular teacher leadership system.
This study exemplified these descriptions of a qualitative case study. Teachers, teacher leaders, and a principal were asked via interviews to detail their understanding of the school’s unique teacher leadership system, the roles the teacher leaders play within the system and their purposes, and how interactions with these leaders impacted classroom instruction. Individuals had differing perspectives depending on their experiences, philosophies, and relationships with others that could be best investigated via interviews in a case study. The purpose of the first research question was to investigate the similarities and differences between the principal’s, teacher leaders’, and teachers’ understandings regarding teacher leadership at their school. The second research question investigated how these similarities and discrepancies impact the instructional decisions of teachers as they interact with teacher leaders. This case study allowed the researcher to illuminate the intricacies of one school’s teacher leadership system.

**Participant Selection**

Within the one K–12, rural, public school, the primary participants of this case study were the principal, four teacher leaders (two elementary and two high school), and four classroom teachers (two elementary and two high school). The Q comp Coordinator was asked to participate to gain background knowledge and information regarding the district’s Q Comp plan, however, the focus for the study is the coherence of this system of teacher leadership in one particular school within the district. Creswell & Poth (2018, pp. 159–160) suggested that no more than 4–5 cases be included in a study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p. 101) suggested that interviews be conducted until a point of saturation is reached, making it difficult to know the exact number of participants at the onset of the study. Ideally, for an administrator to understand the scope of perspectives in a building, data would be collected from many (if not all) teachers and teacher leaders in one building. However, because this study was limited by time, only a
sample of teachers and teacher leaders was obtained. The formal teacher leaders and classroom teachers had some connection to the teacher leaders such as being observed by the teacher leader, or had been a member of the professional learning community led by the teacher leader.

An exclusion criterion for the principal was the presence of an assistant principal who directly shared instructional leadership duties with the principal. This study was a dive into shared communication, vision, and philosophy regarding teacher leadership between a principal, teacher leaders, and the classroom teachers in a three-tiered system. The addition of an assistant principal would have added another layer of complexity beyond the scope of this study.

Teacher leadership positions vary in the responsibilities and time allocated to fulfill these duties. This study was designed to include formal teacher leaders, those who were in a role created by the district, appointed or voted in by the teachers, and may or may have been compensated or released from their classroom teaching duties to fulfill their leadership responsibilities. Examples of teacher leaders include a peer coach, peer observer, or professional learning community facilitator.

A parameter for the classroom teachers interviewed in this they were to not hold any current formal leadership duties. These teachers may be on district advisory committees but not hold a formal leadership position designed to lead a group of teachers or coach individuals. The second research question of this study was to understand how a shared understanding of teacher leadership roles did or did not impact the changes teachers made in their classrooms via engaging with teacher leaders. For this reason, the teachers had to have some connection to the teacher leaders interviewed, whether they were coached by the teacher leader or were in a professional learning community led by that teacher leader at some point. The teachers and teacher leaders in this study had multiple forms of engagement opportunities (see Figure 5).
Note: Although the Mentor is a formal position, the job requirements do not allow the mentor to facilitate groups, or coach. The Mentor serves in a limited instructional capacity, rather orients new teachers to the building. The current and past PLC Facilitators in the high school declined participation in the study.

The sample size allowed for enough different perspectives to begin to understand the importance of role clarity, vision, and the operations of the teacher leadership system from these different perspectives. The rationales and unique perspectives given from the teachers and teacher leaders may have been influenced by a myriad of factors including career length, if the teachers were leaders themselves once, relationships with colleagues, and their own broader leadership styles and philosophies (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

The purpose of this study was not to find out the degree, as measured by some quantitative means, to which the roles of teacher leaders and the rationale for the positions were understood among the whole faculty or to assess the degree to which the whole faculty has engaged productively with the teacher leaders. Rather, the purpose was to illuminate, on a case-
by-case basis of a select sample of teachers, the coherence of the teacher leadership program including shared rationales, role clarity, and outcomes of the understanding of teacher leadership. This investigation of a system of teacher leadership may provide administrators and other stakeholders a lens through which to examine their own systems of teacher leadership on a larger scale. This study also addressed the gap in the literature regarding the importance of role clarity and shared understandings when designing, implementing, and monitoring a system of teacher leadership.

**Procedures**

**Participant Selection**

A case study is focused on one particular bounded system (Creswell & Poth, 2018; and Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 38). The bounded system for this case study was that of one PreK–12, rural school and the administration and faculty within it at the time of this study. The inclusion criteria for the school was that it had to be a participant of Minnesota’s Quality Compensation (Q-Comp) program which mandated a structured system of formal teacher leadership. This structure was built cooperatively between the school board and exclusive representation of the teachers and must have been agreed upon by both parties (Minnesota Department of Education, 2019). This selection criteria ensured the establishment of a formal system of teacher leadership which formed the basis for this study.

An additional inclusion criterion for the school site was that it must have been a public, K–12, rural school. Charter schools or alternative settings represent atypical settings beyond the scope of this study. Many of the studies regarding teacher leadership were from larger, urban schools, rather this study utilized data collected from a rural school. Rural schools are often comprised of a smaller administrator to teacher ratio, which may impact the ability of the
principal to communicate with teachers.

After considering the inclusion criteria for the school, convenience sampling was used to select the school based on the location of this researcher’s place of practice. After contacting the superintendent to obtain permission to use the school as a research site, snowball sampling was used to select participants thereafter. The superintendent recommended a school within the district and established contact with a principal. After the principal agreed to be interviewed, the principal had the opportunity to recommend teacher leaders, and from there, teacher leaders had the opportunity to recommend teachers. Teacher leaders were asked for recommendations regardless if they felt the teacher would hold positive or negative viewpoints of teacher leadership. Finally, the Q Comp coordinator was interviewed, recommendations for participants were asked, and documents concerning the Q Comp plan were collected to provide an overview and background of the teacher leadership system.

Protection of Participants

The informed consent document was sent electronically to all participants. This document outlined the rights of the individual to freely participate and withdraw their participation, that they will be recorded, that the recording destroyed after the research is complete, a pseudonym may be used for each participant and the district, and they may ask questions at any time. The snowball sample method only provided the researcher with leads to contact, not to divulge any information on who was actually contacted.

Expert Review

The semi-structured interview questions were vetted by Dr. Michael Coquyt, Professor of Learning and Leadership at Minnesota State University Moorhead, an expert in the field of
teacher leadership. Dr. Coquyt has written three books on the topic of teacher leadership and approved the initial questions.

**Data Collection**

A semi-structured interview process was the primary method of data collection for this case study. The questions were developed using an interview protocol and were the same for all teachers and the same for all teacher leaders, however unlike structured interviews, follow up questions and conversation between the researcher and participant to understand the perspectives were be used to clarify concepts (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 167; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 110). Questions were individualized for the principal and Q Comp coordinator. The theme of the rationale for teacher leadership, role clarity, and whether or not teacher leader suggestions were used by teachers were common between the interviews for all three primary categories of participants (see Appendix A). The Q Comp Coordinator provided district level information including the Q Comp plan, some background of the program, plan evaluation reports, and the types of training the district and teacher leaders have received. Demographic data such as number of years in education, degrees held, leadership experience, and subjects taught was also collected from each participant.

After participants were contacted and agreed to be interviewed, the informed consent form was sent and received via email. The participants were emailed the questions ahead of time to prepare for the interview. Participants were interviewed synchronously via a phone call or a web-based video conferencing tool such as Zoom, with password protected session admission. If agreed upon by the participant, web-based video conferencing was recorded by screen casting on a personal, password protected computer, or the audio recorded on a nearby personal, password protected iPad. Phone calls were recorded by putting the participant on speaker phone in a
private room and recording on another device such as a nearby personal, password protected computer or iPad. The interviews lasted approximately from 30 minutes to one hour. The data was stored on password protected devices, and will be destroyed in June of 2021, after the entire research process is completed.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016, pp. 115–117) discussed the pros and cons of electronic communication including lag or inadequate internet access for video conferencing and not being able to see facial expressions and body language in telephone interviews. The pros were that video conferences are convenient to record, overcome the barriers of distance and travel, and allow the participants and researcher to participate from a comfortable location of their choosing. Electronic communication was highly recommended at the time of this study due to the global COVID-19 pandemic events and governmental safer at home orders.

Finally, documents collected attributed to the triangulation of the study. Methods of triangulation increase the internal validity and credibility of a study’s findings (Bush, 2012, p. 84; Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 259; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 244). Two methods of triangulation, multiple methods of data collection and multiple sources of data, were used. Obtaining the district’s Q Comp plan, site review documents, and information related to the training of teacher leaders gave insight to the district’s overall stance and development of this system of teacher leadership and allowed the interviews to be checked not only with each other but the plan as well. Interviewing people with multiple perspectives including the principal, teachers, teacher leaders, and Q Comp coordinator constituted multiple sources of data through which the coherence of teacher leadership was analyzed.

Data Analysis
The primary data collected for this study were interviews. These interviews were from the principal, teacher leaders, and teachers. The documents regarding the district’s Q Comp plan and teacher leader development were ancillary documents, as was the interview with the Q Comp Coordinator (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 178). Fullan (2016) suggested one of the first steps toward coherence is to focus the direction by providing clarity of strategy, however, while districts may have a plan aligned on paper, it is the interactions with others that that will lead to coherence.

You can’t just align the policies on paper. This theoretical or delivered alignment has little to do with how people in the field experience it. Coherence making, in other words, has to be achieved at the receiving end, not the delivery end. (Fullan, 2016, p. 6)

In alignment with Fullan’s assertions, the primary data collected were the interviews, especially those of the teachers, and secondary data will be the documents collected.

The data analysis process followed that of Merriam’s (1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) methodological model for case studies. Merriam suggested that the data first be managed and organized. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher using a laptop, the data labeled and stored per interviewee, and a spreadsheet created for the preliminary analysis process. Transcriptions included numbering the questions asked and numbering each line of text or paragraph for ease of finding information later. While transcribing, memos were added, and the document formatted for further analysis.

The auxiliary documents collected were scrutinized to determine authenticity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). One of the Q Comp Coordinator’s duties was to update documents, store them, and guarantee their authenticity as they are used heavily in district policy making. Next, the documents were cataloged and stored on the same password protected computer. The documents
were analyzed for objective descriptions of the rationale for the system of teacher leadership and role descriptions to assist in understanding the system of teacher leadership at the particular school.

Qualitative data analysis occurs simultaneously with data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 197; Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 185). As Merriam suggested, the interviews were transcribed, and a preliminary analysis performed before the next interview. This ongoing analysis added focus to the analysis process, informed the researcher of new ideas and questions to ask future participants, and determined the point of saturation or the need for follow up interviews. The same process was depicted by Creswell and Poth (2018) in the form of a data analysis spiral due to the cyclic nature of going from data collection, to analysis, and back to data collection as many times as needed (p. 186).

During this preliminary analysis, a coding system consisting of short words or phrases was developed to label pieces of data on the transcripts that related to the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 199; Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 188). Open coding allowed the researcher to consider a wide range of data, then discern what was relevant to the research question (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 204). Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested the addition of a codebook to define codes (p. 191). As transcripts are read, emergent ideas were recorded as memos in the margins of the text. These memos were assigned numbers for later grouping. These memos and assigned numbers were defined in the codebook as well citing criterion for inclusion (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 187).

Next, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p. 206), the process of axial coding to group codes into similar categories was employed. Merriam (1998) likened this process to the inductive constant comparative method in which one compares a piece of data with another in
order to sort the data into categories. The next transcript underwent the same process of open and axial coding. Groupings from the first interview to the second were compared and merged, making one master list of categories.

Categories were refined as more codes developed, and different ideas or patterns emerged from the transcripts. Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p. 201) described the movement from inductive to deductive reasoning that was utilized throughout the analysis process. During the beginning of the study information was deductively derived into categories. Both inductive and deductive reasoning were utilized midway through analysis as categories were tested and modified with the introduction of new codes and data. Finally, deductive reasoning was primarily used when the researcher was looking for more data to confirm or support the categories, or nothing new was emerging from the transcripts.

The categories eventually represented the findings of the study, therefore enough categories were made to encompass all relevant data; categories were mutually exclusive; responsive and sensitive to the data therein; and were conceptually congruent rendering the findings to manifest at the same level of abstraction (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 213).

The evidence used to develop each category was listed in the spreadsheet. This process allowed categories to be evaluated for consistency and ease of retrieval of data that illustrate the findings. Categories were developed into themes and clearly named using themes derived from the participants, themes from the theoretical framework or other sources from the literature review, or from the researcher’s own reasoning. Merriam (1998) suggested diagramming to create a representation of the themes, linkages or subcategories representative of the findings (p. 188).
A goal of this study was to describe the realities and perceptions of participants from their point of view. The process of constructing realities between each participant and the researcher, then furthermore analyzing and interpreting these accounts in search of themes may lead to questions of credibility and validity of the findings as the researcher’s bias may seep into the process, or important points overlooked. To ensure validity of the study, qualitative researchers need to engage in member checking (Creswell & Poth, p. 261; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 246). Member checking is a process in which the researcher brings the preliminary analyses back to the participants and ask them to provide feedback on the accuracy of their account, including the recognition of their experiences in the study or suggest fine-tuning. At the conclusion of their interview, the participants were informed they would be contacted at a later date to review the findings and provide their feedback.

**Instruments**

**Role of the Researcher**

A characteristic of qualitative research is that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 43; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 16). As such, the researcher must practice reflexivity, or make biases known to position one’s self in the context of the research, disclose how the biases of the researcher may influence the collection and interpretation of findings, and what the researcher hopes to learn from participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 44, 261; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 16).

**Previous Knowledge and Bias**

As discussed previously in Chapter 1 (pp. 6, 16) I was the Q Comp Coordinator for a rural school district for five years. I was part of the team that developed the Q Comp plan and was the first coordinator of the program. As Coordinator, my job duties were to work with a core
leadership team to implement the plan including training of teacher leaders and the staff, 
evaluating the outcomes of the plan, and making suggestions for improvement. Using multiple 
methods of data collection, I found significant breakdowns in the coherence of the teacher 
leadership program. Though many whole faculty presentations were given, these discrepancies, 
and more importantly – the awareness of the discrepancies – depended on the position of the 
person (whether they were a teacher, teacher leader, or administrator). These differences led to 
significant variance in the amount and quality of teacher engagement with instructional teacher 
leaders, as seen from the willingness of teachers to attempt new instructional strategies in the 
classroom. Particularly, between teachers and principals, there was a discrepancy of perceptions 
of teacher leaders as tools in executing top-down mandates versus fostering genuine 
collaborative professionalism.

During my time as coordinator, I also acquired administrative licenses and served as a 
peer observer and professional learning community facilitator. I was able to holistically analyze 
the system of teacher leadership from my experiences and knowledge gained from 
implementing, evaluating, and developing the system, being subject to the system as a teacher, 
and being a teacher leader myself. I have also worked with four different principals in the district 
as a teacher leader, each having a slightly different plan for and outlook on teacher leadership. 
Furthermore, the culture of the school was not one conducive to high levels of teacher 
leadership. Rather, it indicative of low levels of trust between teachers and administrators, low 
levels of student achievement, and strong egalitarian behaviors among the faculty.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that rather than attempting to eliminate biases, it is 
important to identify them and monitor them thereby reducing their impact on the study (p. 16). 
Biases can manifest during the literature review, data collection, analysis, and reporting stages of
research. During the literature review, DaCosta (2012) suggested sharing differing viewpoints than your own (p. 69). I believe I have thoroughly shared the successes and difficulties of the varying aspects of teacher leadership systems relevant to this study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that biases shared during the interview process can affect the answers provided by the participant (p. 130). Therefore, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) advised researchers to explore only the participant’s assumptions, not share assumptions. During data analysis and reporting the findings, biases need to be checked to uphold standards of research ethics. Skewing data, or only looking for and reporting evidence that supports the researcher’s preferred outcomes not only demonstrates bias, but it is unethical. Though I am focusing on the coherence, roles, and rationales of teacher leadership, several other factors including culture, relationships, student needs, and other goals can impact teacher’s ability to enact change and the coherence surrounding systems of teacher leadership.

My bias is that I expect there to be discrepancies between the three parties (principal, teacher leaders, and teachers) regarding the coherence of the system of teacher leadership, and these discrepancies to be more apparent between principals and teachers. Furthermore, those teachers who hold viewpoints regarding teacher leadership that are most in conflict with teacher leaders and administrators will be less likely to engage with teacher leaders or willing to change their practice. However, Fullan and Quinn (2016, p. 2) suggested that seeking coherence is a continual process. I will approach this research study with an open mind, allowing the participants to share their realities as systems of teacher leadership change over time.

During this research study, I hope to learn how coherence manifests in another system of teacher leadership and its impacts on teachers’ interactions with teacher leaders. I also hope to learn about the rationales for teacher leadership among different stakeholders and how these
rationales were formed. Furthermore, I hope to learn how role clarity and culture impact the coherence of the teacher leadership system.

Several electronic devices were used for the collection of data. First, my personal cell phone was used to make and receive phone calls, paper and pencil was used to take notes during phone interviews and an iPad was used to record the phone conversation. These notes were kept in a locked file cabinet. In the cases of web-based video conferencing, a password protected laptop computer was used to stream the conference and record it, and an iPad to provide a backup recording of the audio. All documents received were kept on a password protected computer.

**Qualifications**

My training and experience conducting interviews consisted of formal classes contained in the Doctor of Education program at Minnesota State University, Moorhead. Within this program, interviews used for field research were supervised and guided by course requirements. The authors I have consulted regarding interview skills included Briggs et al. (2012), Merriam and Tisdell (2016), and Creswell and Poth (2018). These authors suggested using interview protocols, levels of interviews (structured, semi structured, or informal) and when to use them, transcription methods, and data analysis.

In addition to this formalized training, I received training from the Minnesota Department of Education on instructional coaching practices and facilitation. During these annual workshops, issues similar to those of interviewing were discussed including identifying bias, suspending judgement, asking open ended or facilitative questions, active listening, and encouraging dialogue. Similar to this training, I have read Jim Knight’s (2011; 2018) guides on effective coaching. Moreover, I am an alumna of the Blandin Community Leadership Program.
This program was an intensive week-long retreat with follow up days that not only addressed building healthy communities but addressed communication skills across diverse populations that coincide with the aforementioned issues. I also have experience facilitating professional learning communities, conducting peer observations, and conducting informal interviews with teachers regarding program evaluation of the Q Comp program. The common themes among all these trainings were to become partners with participants, seek to understand their perspective, create a common reality, and become a good communicator, all of which are essential skills of a qualitative researcher (Merriam, 1998, p. 23). However, this research study will be the first large scale, formal foray into using interviews for the purpose of a qualitative case study. I believe I possess the foundational skills of a qualitative interviewer.

**Ethical Considerations**

Creswell and Poth’s (2018) framework was utilized while considering ethical considerations along each point in the research process from prior to conducting the study, beginning the study, collecting data, analyzing data, reporting data, and publishing the study (p. 55). Prior to conducting the study, IRB approval for this study was obtained from the Minnesota State University, Moorhead, IRB board. Permission from the superintendent of a district was received to use a school within the district as a research site. The study was also discussed with the school’s principal. In designing the study, consideration was given to the possibility of retaliation or embarrassment from the principal toward teachers for giving their candid responses during the interviews, should the principal take offense or become concerned. However, the principal is aware of the study, the questions to be asked, and was informed the researcher cannot and will not disclose who is to be interviewed. The fact that this study could reveal helpful
information in creating a stronger, more coherent system of teacher leadership was also
discussed with the principal.

While beginning to conduct the study, an informed consent form was developed which
informed the participants of their freedom to choose to participate or withdraw from the study at
any time, explicitly detailed the purpose of the study and their role as participants, detailed
interview procedures, and disclosed no harm. The form also ensured the protection of the
identities of the research site and the participants by using pseudonyms if needed, storing data in
secure locations, and destroying data at the conclusion of the study.

I fully disclosed that I had no conflicts of interest as the research site was not my place of
practice. During the data analysis, reporting, and publishing phases of this study, I adhered to the
ethical practices including using clear and transparent language, reporting all findings, and
maintaining confidentiality of the participants.

Summary

The purposes of this study were twofold. First, the study investigated the first research
question: How do the rationales of teachers, teacher leaders, and principals regarding teacher
leadership in their schools align? Second, as the second research question asked, the study
investigated the impacts of this alignment on classroom teacher’s abilities to engage with teacher
leaders to enact instructional improvements.

Perceptions regarding teacher leadership are socially constructed and interpretive in
nature, rendering a qualitative design most appropriate for this study. Furthermore, in order to
capture the realities and interpretations of the participants, interviews were conducted.
Documents concerning the teacher leadership system were collected to understand the system as
a whole. The combination of interviews and documents from one particular school, bound by this
point in time, and involving the individuals only in this setting justified the case study method. The design of this qualitative case study was based upon that of Merriam’s (1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) case study applications in educational settings.

Convenience sampling was used to identify the school district for this study. The participants were from one rural K–12 public school that was enrolled in Minnesota’s Q Comp program. The Q Comp program ensured a system of formal teacher leadership that had already been negotiated between the exclusive representation of the teachers and the school district. Snowball sampling was used to identify participants that have had interaction with each other in a teacher leader to teacher relationship. The principal, four teacher leaders, and four teachers were the primary participants and were interviewed using a semi-structured technique via internet video conferencing or telephone. The documents collected and an informal interview with the district’s Q Comp Coordinator were auxiliary data that added internal reliability and a method of triangulation to the study.

The data analysis process followed a spiraling procedure in which interviews were transcribed by the researcher and underwent open and axial coding to form categories. The analysis process was conducted simultaneously with data collection to uncover themes and allow for adjustments in the interviewing process. Memos were to be numbered and kept organized as emerging themes develop from the data. The categories were scrutinized for consistency of data application and linked to form broader themes. The relationship between findings was represented graphically to further communicate the findings of the study. The initial analysis was to underwent member checking, providing an opportunity for the participants to offer feedback on the clarity and relevance of the analysis.
Participants were given an informed consent form detailing the rights and safeguards of the participants, including the confidentiality of identities and revealing information, disclosing minimal risk, and the protection of the data on secure electronic devices. Following standards of ethical research practice, I held my own biases in check by not asking leading questions or corroborating with the participants; I reported all findings and not just those that support my position. Finally, this study garnered IRB approval from Minnesota State University, Moorhead.

In Chapter 4, details regarding the actual obtained sample will be provided. The research methodology as prescribed by Merriam (1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) will be explained as it was applied to the data. Finally, the data and the results of the analysis procedures will be presented.

**Chapter 4: Findings**

**Introduction**

Teacher leadership is a nuanced, complex system, that holds potential to impact teacher development and student outcomes. In order to understand those nuances and their implications research studies such as this must be performed. In this Chapter, the steps of the research plan as described and justified in Chapters 1–3 will be detailed as they were implemented with participants. The actual interactions the researcher had with the participants are explained, the data analysis method is explained as the findings unfold, and the research questions are answered. Additionally, this chapter includes the researcher’s role and interest in the study, a description of the actual participants, how the data analysis method was actually executed, and the resultant data and findings.

The data and results presented in this chapter are organized by two groups of participants, elementary and high school. The procedures, data, and analysis will be presented for each group
separately as each data set applies to the research questions. For example, the research questions
will be examined according to the elementary data, then the research questions will be examined
according to the high school data. The two groups will then be compared, and larger themes
analyzed.

**Researcher’s Role**

I became interested in studying teacher leadership because as previously stated in Chapter
1, I was a Q Comp Coordinator. Personally, as an educational leader, I was deeply interested in
discovering the nuances of an intricate system that would impact teacher development and
ultimately student outcomes. In my setting at the time of research, students were
underperforming, and teachers and administrators were stressed. The findings from this study
would not only help me in my practice as an educational leader, but help all educators and
administrators understand teacher leadership more deeply, and potentially use this study as a
starting point to reflect upon their own systems.

The background experiences I draw from are not only those of being a Coordinator for
five years, but also from being a PLC Facilitator, Peer Observer (Peer Coach), and teacher. I am
able to draw upon these multiple experiences to strengthen the vision of this study. At the same
time, the challenges and successes I experienced may interfere with my objectivity, though I
worked diligently to approach this scenario with fresh eyes and an open mind, relied on the
participants to describe their reality to me, and constructed a reality based upon their accounts.

I have completed the coursework in preparation for this study which included supervised
field exercises in qualitative methodologies. I drew heavily upon Merriam’s (1998; Merriam &
Tisdell, 2016) model and literature surrounding case study methodology. Furthermore, I had the
honor of being a graduate assistant at Minnesota State University, Moorhead, and have analyzed and edited articles and dissertations using multiple methods and a case study approach.

Personally, my ability to analyze both the big picture and the minute details of a situation my have influenced what I learned from this study. I attributed this ability to my background in music directing and education. A director must be able to analyze and synthesize fine details from the written composition itself, the musician’s skills, the overall purpose of the work, and the quality of the product, all while making adjustments in real time. This study concerned the discovery and understanding of the fine-grained nuances of roles and rationales, analyzed complex relationships, and related them all to the bigger purpose of teacher development and student outcomes within a unique, evolving system of teacher leadership.

**Description of the Sample**

The K–12 school in which the participants practiced was a rural school in Minnesota, and part of a larger district. According to the Minnesota Report Card (2018), the high school consisted of 145 predominantly White students (2.1% Hispanic or Latino, 7% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 26.9% special education, 40% free/reduced priced lunch). The high school employed 14 teachers who are also predominantly White. Some of these teachers (i.e., specialists) were shared with the elementary school. The elementary consists of 107 predominantly White students (1.9% Hispanic or Latino, 3.7% American Indian or Alaska Native, 28% special education, 49.5% free/reduced priced lunch). There were 10 teachers in the elementary who were all women and predominantly White.

The district has been participating in Minnesota’s Q Comp program for 10 years. According to the Minnesota Department of Education (n. d., para. 1), Q Comp “is a voluntary program that allows districts and exclusive representatives of teachers to design and collectively
bargain a plan that meets the four components of the law”. Those parts are Career Ladder/Advancement options, Job-embedded Professional Development, Teacher Evaluation, and Performance Pay/Alternative Salary Schedule. It is the Career Ladder/Advancement Options part of Q Comp that comprises the formalized system of teacher leadership for participating Q Comp school districts. The teacher leadership system addressed the Job-embedded Professional Development requirement. Each participating district created its own a unique plan to fulfill the requirements of the law and implemented it locally.

According to this district’s Q Comp Plan (Seagren, 2010) and how it was implemented at this particular school, there was one Peer Coach (teacher who observes other teachers and gives them non-evaluative feedback) in the high school and one in the elementary; one PLC facilitator (teacher who leads and organizes the PLC meetings) for the high school and one for the elementary; one Mentor (teacher who offers support for new to the career or district teachers) for the high school and one for the elementary; one Coordinator (teacher who oversees plan implementation and program evaluation) for the district; and one Oversight Committee (comprised of administrators and teachers from the district) for the district. The plan had not changed in the 10 years of implementation aside from allocating more funds to certain positions and adding more PLC groups as needed.

According to the Q Comp Coordinator and the Principal, by design, the Principal did not have a role in the selection and training of the teacher leaders but had the ability to work with the teacher leaders once they were in their roles. Both report that the Coordinator worked closest with the PLC process.

The demographics of the participants in this study are outlined in Table 2. The majority of years of experience for all participants were within this school. Throughout the study, the
participants will be referred to by their position of leadership as this is a critical perspective in this study. For example, the first-grade teacher will be referred to as “Elementary Peer Coach” or “Peer Coach” in the elementary section. The teacher leaders did reflect through both of their positions as leaders and as teachers. Figure 5 clarified the relationships between the participants.

### Table 2

**Participant Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant by Position</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of Experience in Education</th>
<th>Teacher Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>woman</td>
<td>17 (5 Principal)</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q Comp Coordinator</td>
<td>woman</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>woman</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>PLC Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Grade</td>
<td>woman</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Grade</td>
<td>woman</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Grade</td>
<td>woman</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>man</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Peer Coach (former)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media/Science</td>
<td>man</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>man</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>woman</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Methodology Applied to the Data Analysis**

Snowball sampling was used to find contacts for this study. The participants were contacted via email to procure interest in the study, schedule interviews, send and receive the letter of informed consent, and send a copy of the initial interview questions (see Appendix A for interview questions). Participants that did not answer or declined were noted. Interviews were conducted via a video streaming software called Zoom (zoom.us), and others were conducted over the phone. The audio and video from the Zoom streams were both recorded on a laptop, and
a backup recording of the audio only was simultaneously recorded on an iPad. The phone conversations were recorded by putting the phone on speaker and using an iPad to record.

After the interview and recording process was completed for each interview, the data analysis process commenced and followed that of Merriam’s (1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) methodological model for case studies, in congruence with that of Creswell and Poth’s spiral process (2018). The data was organized on a laptop computer and backed up using a private cloud storage service. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher then imported into an application called Notability (https://www.gingerlabs.com) in order for the researcher to interact with the text and annotate. The documents received from the Q Comp Coordinator were stored using the same laptop, backed up using the same cloud service, and examined for authenticity and triangulation against the data collected from participants.

The qualitative data analysis procedures occurred simultaneously with the data collection as recommended by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and Creswell and Poth (2018). Each interview was transcribed after it was completed. A deductive, preliminary analysis was first conducted using open coding, in which any important or interesting information was highlighted, notes and memos were written in the margins and after the text, and short words or phrases were labeled with preliminary codes. As this process continued, pieces of data from interviews were compared with each other and sorted into proper codes, marking the preliminary stages of axial coding and the constant comparative method (Merriam, 1998). Some criteria needed to be established to ensure all data for that code were appropriate. A numbering system was used to combine codes and memos for further grouping via a spreadsheet.

This ongoing deductive analysis added focus to the analysis process and informed the researcher of new questions to ask future participants (see Appendix A). Likewise, it allowed the
researcher to contact previous participants to gain their perspectives if the question could not be derived from the previous interview. Three previous participants provided additional written responses to follow up questions.

As the spiral and methodical data analysis continued by simultaneously analyzing the interviews and collecting more data, themes began to emerge from the codes and memos to create even larger categories and themes needing abstract reasoning to summarize. At this point, the analysis shifted to use inductive reasoning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 201). The researcher went back through the interviews to find more data to support the categories as nothing new was emerging from the transcripts. At this point, the researcher felt a point of saturation had been reached. Additionally, participants consistently described the same reality.

This entire process was completed in two phases, first with the data collected from the elementary participants and then the high school participants. It was evident through the interview process that the realities of the two groups were different and warranted separate analysis to examine those differences and find similarities.

At the conclusion of the data analysis process, a draft of the results was sent to all participants to complete the member checking process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). No revisions were recommended.

**Presentation of Data and Results of the Analysis**

**Elementary Findings**

**Research Question 1**

The first research question was, “How do the rationales of teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators regarding teacher leadership in their school align?”
Identification of Teacher Leadership Roles. In order to answer this research question, participants were asked several questions that built in specificity. First, common language between the researcher and participants needed to be established regarding the definition of formal teacher leadership and roles to be discussed in detail. All participants mentioned informal teacher leadership positions or those outside of the Q Comp system such as early childhood coordinator, child study team leader, leadership team member, or PBIS team member.

When Q Comp was mentioned, the elementary participants collectively identified all positions within the system (PLC Facilitator, Peer Coach, Mentor, Oversight Committee, and Q Comp Coordinator), however not all participants mentioned each one nor did they consistently use the position titles. They did, however, all identify the same functions for the roles they described. For example, all participants mentioned the PLC Facilitator role and described the responsibilities as collecting and reviewing reflections after each meeting, finalizing the agenda, and keeping the group focused. Similarly, all participants mentioned the Peer Coach role (though one teacher mislabeled it a mentor teacher) and described the pre-conference, observation, and post-conference protocol resulting in feedback and reflection. Three participants mentioned the Coordinator role and described it as a district wide position; two participants mentioned the Mentor role for new teachers; and two participants mentioned the Oversight Committee member role, however neither participant was sure of the function of the Oversight Committee or if it should actually be included as leadership. The principal was able to explain each role in its entirety.

These descriptions of the various roles are also consistent with the job descriptions in the district’s Q Comp Plan (Seagren, 2010). When asked how teachers became aware of the expectations for the roles, the Principal stated that the Q Comp Coordinator trained the teacher
leaders upon entry into the position, and the roles are indoctrinated into the structure of the building. No formal training regarding teacher leadership roles was given to the staff, aside from training given to the actual teacher leaders. The Coordinator mentioned presentations given to the teacher leaders to share with the faculty may have information of this regard to share.

**Rationale of the Teacher Leadership System.** When asked what the purpose of their system of teacher leadership was, on a broad scale, participants’ answers revealed a central theme of collaboration aimed to increase teacher and student improvement, demonstrating alignment. Table 3 displays the responses from the elementary participants organized by codes that led to this overarching theme. Even though the Kindergarten and Second Grade Teachers were not teaching at the time of its inception and were not explicitly told, they could still extrapolate the purpose of the system of teacher leadership from their experiences within the system.

**Table 3**

*Elementary Participants’ Responses to Purpose of the Teacher Leadership System*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>• Get teachers out of their silos</td>
<td>Collaboration/Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>• Teachers working in Teams</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>• Want to be more collaborative</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td>• Build a professional learning community and benefit from it</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Gr. Teacher</td>
<td>• It's not only just your classroom…to know how to work together as a team</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Teacher</td>
<td>• To be able to collaborate with the other teachers, be able to work together</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>• Become better teachers</td>
<td>Teacher Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Gr. Teacher</td>
<td>• How to deliver education, or develop our teaching skills</td>
<td>Teacher development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Teacher</td>
<td>• Maintain a unified front</td>
<td>Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Teacher</td>
<td>• It doesn't make you feel alone</td>
<td>Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Gr. Teacher</td>
<td>• Makes me feel like I can do this job</td>
<td>Self-Efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>• Address student learning</td>
<td>Student needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>• Help our kids get what they need</td>
<td>Student needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>• It's just focused on how do we improve things at our school for the better of the kids. How do we help kids succeed and what's our role in that?</td>
<td>Student Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>• The direction the state was going to go</td>
<td>State Direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>• PLCs were really taking off at the time</td>
<td>State Direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td>• Increase our salaries initially, though I don’t think that’s the focus anymore</td>
<td>Money</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, those participants who had longevity in the school mentioned state trends and additional pay as key components in the initial implementation of the system of teacher leadership, but no longer believe these reasons to be the prominent rationale for the basis of the system of teacher leadership. It is clear that as time passed, alignment became more apparent. The Facilitator, who was in the school for 3 years before the system was implemented, reflected upon the beginnings of the system stating, “I really didn’t know what I thought of it or what I expected out of it, and I don’t know that any of us really did,” but explained as it has evolved, the focus has become clearer. Additionally, participants mentioned turnover in the elementary. When those previous veteran staff members were present, participants stated resistance was felt. The Peer Coach and Second Grade Teacher both agreed that “there is a place for it” and it is a “valuable program.”

**Status of Teacher Leaders.** When asked to describe the status of teacher leaders on a spectrum from administrative-like qualities to teacher-like qualities, the teachers, teacher leaders,
and principal consistently stated teacher leaders are teacher-like. The newest staff member, the Second Grade Teacher, stated,

I don't think anybody looks at it like ‘I'm higher up the totem pole than you are.’ I mean we're basically all on one path, that it's not, ‘Look at me, I get all the attention.’ That's not it at all.

The Facilitator’s comment, “I am no more knowledgeable or good at what I do than any of the teachers I work with. We are a team,” supported the theme that all teachers and teacher leaders are equals. Likewise, the Peer Coach stated, “I am not there to judge teachers,” leaving that responsibility to the Principal. Teacher leaders nor teachers viewed the teacher leaders in an administrative capacity.

Ownership. Finally, a question related to power, control, and direction was asked: “Who drives the agendas for PLC meetings?” The collective answer was the facilitator and teachers plan it together, all while keeping in mind the directives or topics from administration. Participant responses suggested that although at first the rationale for the system of teacher leadership was top-down, ad met with resistance, it did not appear to be the current understanding. Teacher leaders worked to balance the needs of the group and district trends, and teachers are accepting of this dynamic.

The Principal readily identified the onus for the direction as the teachers’ and teacher leaders’ with support from the Coordinator:

They really do have a lot of ownership in that area, it's not driven from admin, the teachers really drive that learning time for themselves. So, as far as my role, it's a little different because I'm not leading that area. I'm just kinda there to support them.
The Principal went on to explain that teachers set the tone for the PLCs, and overall teachers feel empowered. When there were roadblocks, the Coordinator came in to help guide those groups.

The Coordinator indicated more influence, providing the focus of PLCs to be math and reading as they are the “two big tested areas.” The Coordinator went on to say that pedagogically,

there’s been a lot about standards, breaking down standards, getting at the right DOK [Depth of Knowledge] level, learning targets, success criteria, you know best practices with formative assessment versus summative assessment. We’ve been hitting all of those in relation to what is good teaching.

The Coordinator further clarified, “Now, we’ve never really pushed a like, ‘here is the way you have to teach,’ other than student centered—that’s the one thing we push.”

The Facilitator explained the initial planning and direction came from the Q Comp Coordinator, however throughout the year the PLC was jointly planned between herself and the teachers in the PLC. The teachers and Facilitator consistently explained that at the end of each meeting, each individual reflected upon the meeting then the following week’s agenda was created together. The Facilitator reviewed the reflections privately, considered directives, consulted the Peer Coach for concerns, then sent the final agenda to the group members before the next meeting. Both elementary teachers expressed their ownership and participation in driving the PLC. The Kindergarten Teacher summarized this best:

I think it's kind of equal ownership on who's driving it. Our PLC facilitator asks us if there's areas of improvement that we might see and then we as a group decide what we want to pursue or what we want help with, which is really kinda nice, so it's not just someone just dictating things that might be meaningless to us. It's us as a group working
together to figure that out. We have the same goals in mind which makes it so much easier.

**Elementary Summary.** The answers to these questions provided a solid foundation to address the research question of alignment of rationales between the teachers, teacher leaders, and principal. Alignment was present as the rationale of the entire system of teacher leadership was agreed to be collaborative in nature; all participants described the roles of the teacher leaders consistently; teacher leaders were viewed by all parties as absolute equals in collaborative efforts; and shared ownership between teachers and teacher leaders was present for the direction of professional development via PLCs. Furthermore, the functions of the Q Comp Coordinator and Principal seemed to be jointly accepted by all participants. Figure 6 summarizes the results of Research Question 1 and demonstrates the relationship between these results and those of Research Questions 2 and 3.

The difference between alignment and coherence is depicted in Figure 6 to illustrate how the research questions and findings built upon each other, taking into consideration the prior questions’ findings and incorporating them into the next question. Alignment is the agreeance of the technical aspects of the plan such as the alignment of vision, roles to accomplish the vision, and how those roles are enacted. Coherence begins with alignment, but includes the outcomes, perceived behaviors and reactions of people in different roles, and the outcomes of the system. This relationship will be discussed further in Chapter 5.
Research Question 2

The second research question was, “How does the coherence of a system of leadership impact classroom teachers’ abilities to engage with formal teacher leaders?” To answer this
question, the first step was to read through the data and apply a system of open coding. Appendix B provides the initial open codes, criteria for those codes, and sample participant responses associated to those codes as a result of the constant comparative method.

From this deductive reasoning process, the next step was to apply axial coding in which the open codes were grouped into themes (see Table 4). The labels for the two themes “productivity” and “collaboration” were derived from the participant’s own language. The idea for the labels for the themes “culture” and “relationships” were taken from the literature as the words “culture” or “relationships” were not repeatedly mentioned, but were what the participants were describing.

Table 4

*Axial Coding: Elementary Themes derived from Open Codes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Initial Code</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loneliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Common Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mindset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continual Improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buy-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>Productive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Relationships.** Elementary participants discussed how they felt working with teacher leaders, and likewise, elementary teacher leaders described working with elementary teachers.
Participants repeatedly stated that they felt comfortable taking risks, respected the teacher leaders, and had confidence in each other’s abilities. The Kindergarten and Second Grade Teachers agreed that they didn’t feel as lonely when working with others and they felt united. The teacher leaders themselves stated other teachers seemed comfortable whether working one-on-one or in groups with them. These four teachers described the working relationships with all elementary teachers in the school as very positive.

**Collaboration.** The participants recognized and valued their collaborative efforts as the term *collaboration*, or a variant thereof, was mentioned frequently among all the elementary interviews. When discussing the value of PLCs, the Kindergarten Teacher stated,

> I mean there’s never enough time in the day, but if you didn’t have that meeting, I don’t know when you would have time to really be able to talk and work together and be that unified front. And, uhm, I guess, just be able to work together, I don’t know when that would happen.

When speaking about PLCs, the teachers felt not only were they collaboratively planned, but there was time to share ideas, brainstorm to improve existing programs, share concerns, get clarification about initiatives, and reflect together on students and their school. The peer coaching process was mentioned during the interview discussions regarding collaboration, but not labeled as such. Rather, getting the feedback was valued and productive.

**Culture.** The elementary participants described their culture as supportive, informal, family-like, and focused on improvement. The positive relationships described throughout the elementary clearly contributed to this supportive culture. The Principal and Q Comp coordinator attested to the positive elementary culture and buy-in from the group. Pertinent to the development of this culture is the fact that there has been teacher turnover at the elementary
level. All the veteran participants (Principal, Q Comp Coordinator, and Peer Coach) stated the same observation that at first there was resistance but was lessened as new staff came into the school.

The Second Grade Teacher, the newest teacher, picked up on the positive culture and reiterated it several times during her interview: “It creates such a good support system, and we're able to work together and how to improve, because we really want to see each other as being successful.” The most experienced member of the group, the Peer Coach, attributed some of the formation of the positive culture to the teacher leaders by stating: “We've always had really positive facilitators to lead the PLC meeting and so I think that helps too because there's a good mind frame for it - mindset for it.” Evidence of a culture of growth and support surfaced as all the elementary teachers in the school were described as “willing” and “a good group”, and that they want each other “to be successful”. Moreover, when the Kindergarten and Second Grade Teachers described times of feeling overwhelmed or unsure, their self-efficacy was elevated when they observed “everyone else feels the same way,” and the “weight of the world doesn’t have to be on your shoulders”.

**Productivity.** Productivity in this case was described by the participants to mean the ability for teachers to use ideas gained from discussions, perform tasks, plan together, or reflect upon their practice to be more intentional practitioners. According to the participants, productivity stemming from collaborative efforts has varied over the life of the teacher leadership system. The principal reflected, “Some years PLCs accomplish a whole lot and they meet some really good goals, and some years they just can’t seem to get off the ground, and that’s constantly being assessed, like how do we make this better?”
Teachers and teacher leaders felt that when focus, common goals, and relevance was present, the productivity was the highest. The Peer Coach’s comments summarized this combination when she stated,

“It's good, sometimes I think the topic may be, it's not really invigorating, so sometimes we—it's kinda stagnant….I really like when we're doing PLC's to start planning because it really feels like we’re giving kids what they need during those times.”

Peer coaching was also coded into the productive theme as participants stated they valued the feedback given to them by the Peer Coach.

**Predominant Finding.** Reporting each of these themes alone is not enough to answer the second research question of “How does the coherence of a system of leadership impact classroom teachers’ abilities to engage with formal teacher leaders?” Connections between the first question’s findings and the second question’s themes must be made holistically. Findings from the first research question were that the elementary participants’ rationales, expectations, and understandings of the teacher leader roles and the teacher leadership system as a whole were aligned. The themes from the second question revealed that what was expected from teacher leaders and from the system itself, was in fact happening (see Figure 6). The interviews aligned and created a shared reality between the researcher and the participants, even though they were all interviewed separately.

The predominant finding is that several interrelated factors were present simultaneously in the elementary that seem to have positively affected teacher’s abilities to engage with formal teacher leaders. This finding is supported by the mutually reinforcing and in this case, positive, influences of expectations, culture, collaboration, ownership, relationships, and productivity. When all of these factors were present in a positive way, it added to the coherence of a system of
leadership and positively impacted classroom teachers’ abilities to engage with formal teacher leaders.

**Research Question 3**

The third research question was “How does the coherence of a system of teacher leadership impact classroom teachers’ abilities to implement instructional changes?” This question reached for the heart of the research problem, which concerned how teachers change their practice based on their interactions with a system of teacher leadership that may or may not exhibit coherence. From the scenario described by the elementary participants, it would seem that elementary teachers, teacher leaders, and administration were in agreement about the rationale and purpose of the system of teacher leadership and teacher leader roles.

Teachers were asked to reflect upon specific changes they have implemented into their classrooms recently. Among the responses were: classroom management (no specific strategy); technology; implementation of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports system (PBIS); reading incentives, relationship building with students, understanding and use of data from district benchmarking tools, becoming more reflective, becoming more flexible, and responding to students in the moment. The specific items the Q Comp Coordinator listed (breaking down standards, getting at the right DOK [Depth of Knowledge] level, learning targets, success criteria, best practices with formative assessment versus summative assessment) were not mentioned by the teachers. Though these were not mentioned, they simply may not have been at the forefront of teacher’s minds during the interviews. However, broadly, meeting the needs of students and being student-centered, and specifically PBIS, was a priority for the Q Comp Coordinator and Principal. These priorities were evident in teacher’s self-reports but were not conveyed as top-down driven mandates in the interviews. The coherent system of teacher
leadership at this elementary seemed to contribute to the culture of support and trust needed to increase the likelihood these priorities were acted upon as and described in the changes teachers made in their classrooms.

**Reverse Validation.** Coherence up to this point has been examined from a “top-down” linear approach: from philosophy and rationale of a system, role descriptions, role enactments and interactions, to the products from interactions with those roles. The last questions regarding who or what influenced instructional decision making the most was asked to illuminate the role of the administration and teacher leaders in the development of teachers by asking in reverse order what the products of teacher development were (changes in instruction) and who or what influenced teachers most. If one of the agreed upon purposes of a system of teacher leadership was for peers to influence peers, but an overwhelming majority of teachers fully believed administrators were the most influential force, then questions regarding the value of teacher leadership and buy-in would be raised, causing problems in the initial research question of alignment of philosophies, value, and purpose of a system of teacher leadership in the first place.

When asked who or what influenced instructional decision making the most, the Kindergarten and Second Grade Teachers, and the Facilitator all firmly stated student needs. The Peer Coach said information from staff meetings with the Principal, and grade-alike colleagues from other schools in the district also influenced her instructional decisions. Other answers from the group included the health protocols resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, student data, district adopted curricula, time, and support available such as Reading Corps tutors.

When asked to prioritize which group (students, administration, or peers) influenced their instructional decisions most, the Kindergarten Teacher, Second Grade teacher, and the Facilitator all agreed the most influential were the students, followed by peers, and finally administration.
Though all teachers stated they have a supportive Principal who is student centered and “knows where we’re coming from,” administration was not at the top of their influencing forces. The Facilitator’s response was most indicative of the dichotomy of perceived tension (whether real or not) and projected assumptions of influence between teachers and administrators. At first she hesitated, saying, “Do I give the answer that administration would want to hear, or do I give the answer [trailed off in laughter].” She went on to say:

> I think the most influential has to be the kids, and where they’re at and what they need. If you’re not meeting those needs, then what are you here for? And then we have to look as peers, how we can support each other and support what goes on in the building as a whole. And then from there, obviously administration would like us to say they are the top influencer because they tell us these are the standards, and these are the things we have to do, and we do those things, but, how we approach those things and how we get there is really driven by what’s happening in our classrooms.

This conversation illuminated the thought process behind the rationale and of teacher leadership and where teacher leaders stand in relation to teachers and administration. There was an underlying assumption that administration’s goal is to influence how teachers should teach and that those methods may not align with what teachers feel students need.

**Predominant Finding.** A major finding of this study is that in the elementary, the rationale for the system of teacher leadership aligned as teacher leaders acted in their roles as teachers thought they should. Next to students, peers were the most influential factor on teachers’ decision making and teachers articulated changes in their practice. Additionally, a positive, supportive, culture was present. The overall purpose of the system of teacher leadership (from Research Question 1) was to foster teacher collaboration for the good of the students, which was
evidently happening from the themes present in research question 2 and was further validated by the descriptions of instructional changes and admittance to peers being a major influencer in teachers’ decision making. This relationship is demonstrated in Figure 6.

**High School Findings**

**Research Question 1**

The first research question was, “How do the rationales of teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators regarding teacher leadership in their school align?”

**Identification of Teacher Leadership Roles.** Similar to the elementary, high school participants were asked to describe leadership roles in the high school in order to form a common understanding between the researcher and participants of the formal roles to be discussed further. Roles outside of Q Comp mentioned were the child study team leader; teacher’s union executive council members; providing professional development to colleagues (within and out of the building) such as subject or topic specific coaching; coordinating volunteers; athletic coaching; holding a formal role such as an activity director; and being on the high school teacher leadership team.

Collectively, the group mentioned all the leadership positions specific to Q Comp: Mentor, Peer Coach, PLC Facilitator, Coordinator, and Oversight Committee. However, only one person mentioned the Oversight Committee, and all but one person mentioned the Q Comp Coordinator. The Mentor, Peer Coach, and Coordinator positions were described similarly and with certainty which also aligned to the district’s Q Comp Plan (Seagren, 2010).

The PLC Facilitator position was consistently described as “not a leadership position” and that the person “ends up leading anyway” even though in the district’s Q Comp Plan (Seagren, 2010), Facilitators are listed as a leadership position that is voted upon, paid a stipend,
and evaluated. The Social Studies teacher described this dichotomy best when he said the Facilitator is the first among equals, not the boss of the PLC, or the one that’s dictating what’s going on, but they’re definitely doing the leg work and kinda some of the heavy lifting maybe with administration, connecting with our Q Comp Oversight and what needs to be tackled when on the agenda…[The facilitator reminds us that] it is our plc, not my [the facilitator’s] PLC and so our facilitator has been really good at not grabbing power that would be pretty easy to grab at times.

In short, the PLC Facilitator takes care of the “busy work” but, it is a very “diplomatic position”. From these descriptions, teachers associated some power and control with a leadership position. This dichotomy is important to this study as it illuminated conflicting expectations and what happened in reality.

**Rationale of the Teacher Leadership System.** When asked what the purpose of their system of teacher leadership was, on a broad scale, participants’ answers revealed a central theme of collaboration and unity aimed to increase teacher and student improvement, demonstrating alignment in broad rationales, much like the elementary (see Table 5). The Mentor pointed out she was not present during the beginnings of Q Comp, but over her 7 years as a teacher in the school was able to clearly articulate a rationale for teacher leadership. The Math Teacher fully disclosed that he was not “100% certain” as the rationale or philosophy of teacher leadership “had never been fully expressed,” however he did reflect on his current understandings and provide a rationale. Being most veteran, the former Peer Coach along with the Principal described the rationales from the initial implementation stage to the current understanding, agreeing that the system has had “some growing pains.” New themes of
ownership, risk taking, and describing the change in organizational leadership philosophy also emerged.

Table 5

*High School Participants’ Responses to Purpose of the Teacher Leadership System*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies Teacher</td>
<td>• To help you grow as a professional</td>
<td>Teacher Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies Teacher</td>
<td>• We want teachers to be leading professional development of teachers</td>
<td>Teacher Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies Teacher</td>
<td>• More honesty and growth oriented</td>
<td>Teacher Development development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>• Take care of teacher’s needs</td>
<td>Teacher Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Teacher</td>
<td>• Empowering people</td>
<td>Teacher Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Coach (former)</td>
<td>• Continual process of improvement</td>
<td>Teacher Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>• Become better teachers</td>
<td>Teacher Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>• To come together and have that support to work together</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Coach (former)</td>
<td>• More of a collaborative</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Coach (former)</td>
<td>• If we’re all aligned…</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>• Teachers working in Teams</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>• Want to be more collaborative</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>• Get teachers out of their silos</td>
<td>Collaboration/Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>• Working as a team instead of doing our own thing</td>
<td>Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>• Common ground</td>
<td>Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Teacher</td>
<td>• Empowering teams</td>
<td>Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>• To meet the students’ needs</td>
<td>Student Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Coach (former)</td>
<td>• It’ll be a better experience for the kids</td>
<td>Student Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>• Address student learning</td>
<td>Student needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>• Help our kids get what they need</td>
<td>Student needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Teacher</td>
<td>• When people have some skin in the game they have a lot more desire to see things through and be part of solving problems rather than just complaining about them.</td>
<td>Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Teacher</td>
<td>• Certainly takes a lot more ownership over everything.</td>
<td>Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Coach (former)</td>
<td>• From “I really wish admin would take care of this” to “how does this get taken care of?”</td>
<td>Ownership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Status of Teacher Leaders. When asked to describe the status of teacher leaders on a spectrum from administrative-like qualities to teacher-like qualities, the teachers, teacher leaders, and principal perspectives did not always align. The three positions discussed at length were the Q Comp Coordinator, Peer Coaches, and PLC Facilitators.

The Q Comp Coordinator was consistently described as an administrative position as they were the “rules and regulations person.” Even though the teachers understood the person filling the position was also a teacher, the direct influence over the work in the PLC and other positions was associated with power and control. One teacher described it as being a buffer between the administration and the teachers but was muddled and not how the other positions were viewed.

The peer coach position was viewed by all as teacher-like and meant to facilitate self-reflection. Though the Math Teacher agreed that most view the peer coach position as teacher-like and meant to increase teacher growth and subsequently student outcomes, he begged to differ, stating that the use of a rubric by peers for evaluative purposes impedes collaboration and
fosters implementation of administrative ideas, stifling teacher growth. He described a collaborative model in which teachers design lessons together, conduct and observe the lessons together, then discuss the lessons was far superior to teacher observation.

The PLC Facilitator position was described as being teacher-like, or “the first among equals”, however when facilitators were “forced” to focus on other things than what the group deemed necessary, facilitators were described as being caught in a difficult position, forced to decide their allegiance. The Mentor described this predicament when discussing all teacher leaders need to remain as and viewed as teachers.

All of the have-to’s come from administration, not from the facilitators or the peer coaches. They are still teachers, they’re still with us on that level playing field… When we want to like blame people, or get upset, or angry, or you know annoyed, we have to remember where it’s coming from. We can’t push our facilitators or our peer coaches or mentors into a position where they’re the reason, because they’re not. They are one of us. We’re in this together.

Furthermore, the former Peer Coach made the observation that teacher leaders are “teacher-like, but there is like power with the position I guess…There’s some sort of hierarchy associated with it.” He even asserted that it comes down to the individual in the facilitator position in particular, that some teacher leaders really want “to make it so that everyone kinda feels engaged” and others exploit the “position of power and control… ‘I’m a leader, I do a good job, and I control things.’” The Principal commented that “different people facilitate in different ways” and leading wasn’t always easy. It seems from these interviews that the teachers’ philosophies of the positions are that they are teachers first, but in reality, that is not always what is experienced as dictated by the design of the system.
Ownership and Relevance. Finally, a question related to power, control, and direction was asked: “Who drives the agendas for PLC meetings?” The responses to this question reflected the same conflict as was present in the discussion of the status of teacher leaders. As noted in the findings from the elementary, the Principal stated ownership of the PLC meetings lies with the teachers. The teachers all reported that at the end of the PLC meetings the group created an agenda for the following week. Also consistently reported is that an overarching focus is driven by the Q Comp Coordinator. Tension between these two wills was reported by all participants—the teachers, teacher leaders, Principal, and Coordinator. The former Peer Coach commented on the lack of clarity, direction, and tensions regarding ownership:

They [administrators] have this idea of what they want to have happen and certain language, they don’t know exactly what you’re supposed to do, but there’s a lot of ‘Well, you’re not supposed to be doing that’…In teaching, you get all excited about doing something, but then it’s like, ‘Yeah but that doesn’t fit into the Q Comp model because it’s gotta focus on English.’

This tension is in part due to the size and diversity of the PLC group. The Principal was first to recognize this by stating,

It’s not easy being in a PLC with all high school teachers who teach different content areas and your goal is reading. Like that’s really difficult because to get everyone to buy-in on how they can find their place in helping kids achieve that goal is difficult.

The Q Comp Coordinator also recognized this difficulty and suggested the PLC membership be reorganized into smaller groups so focus and relevance could be prioritized. Two teacher leaders mentioned that the large group would split up periodically and come back together.
Though tension was apparent, and ownership was yet to be aligned, all parties agreed that the school had come a long way in transforming teaching and collaborative efforts. The Mentor summed up these observations: “We’ve been really working towards this together as a team. We have a great team, but it’s not perfect and it doesn’t always run smoothly, but we’ve got each other’s backs.”

**High School Summary.** The first research question, “How do the rationales of teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators regarding teacher leadership in their school align?” could be answered by summarizing the high school findings. The rationales regarding the system of teacher leadership as a whole were in alignment: collaboration and unity aimed to increase teacher and student improvement. However, collaboration and unity seemed to be directly tied to ownership of direction, which is a point of contention in the high school. Misalignment regarding the desired purpose of specific teacher leaders and reality was found. The teachers were consistent in describing the PLC facilitator as not a leader, but leading anyway, though the Q Comp Plan clearly states the PLC Facilitator as a leadership position (Seagren, 2010). One member’s philosophy of peer coaching was also not in alignment with his experiences. A seemingly nuanced misalignment between a teacher leader roles and reality could be traced back to a specific part of the rationale or shared vision of teacher leadership: unity and ownership. Figure 7 summarizes these findings and relates these findings to those of Research Questions 2 and 3.
Figure 7

High School Coherence Flowchart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facet of Shared Vision</th>
<th>Results/Expectations</th>
<th>Alignment (RQ 1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Rationale of Teacher Leadership System** | • Collaboration aimed to increase teacher and student improvement.  
• Teacher and Teacher leader addition of ownership. | Aligned + More |
| **Identification/Function of Teacher Leader Roles** | • PLC Facilitator - role conflict (leader/not leader and fulfilling function of fostering ownership).  
• Peer Coach - strong role conflict with one participant. | Somewhat |
| **Status of Teacher Leaders** | • 1 felt a hierarchy for all positions  
• 2 felt teacher-like for all positions  
• 1 felt admin for Peer Coach, and both teacher/admin for PLC facilitator | No |
| **Ownership/Relevance** | • Micro level (day-to-day) PLC, Yes  
• Macro (professional development) No  
• Tension with district initiatives | No |

RQ 2: How does alignment affect teacher–teacher leader engagement?

How does the researcher know?

Themes produced from interviews had positive and negative connotations. See Table 6.

Findings:

• Teachers disengaged when they felt teacher leaders were not acting in a way that supported their vision, especially in terms of ownership and relevance.  
• The opposite holds true.

RQ 3: Impact on teacher’s instruction?

Findings:

• Teachers felt an increase in self and collective efficacy when they felt ownership and relevance.  
• Teachers stated instructional changes and related them to interactions with peers and teacher leaders when ownership and relevance were present.  
• Teachers stated interacting with peers was more influential than administrative orders. A mix of peer and administrative influence was felt, resulting in partial fulfillment of the shared vision.  
• When ownership and relevance were not felt, teachers made changes on their own. The shared vision was not fulfilled.
Research Question 2

The second research question was, “How does the coherence of a system of leadership impact classroom teachers’ abilities to engage with formal teacher leaders?” The data analysis for this question underwent a similar process as that of the elementary. As the data was transcribed after the interview, as system of open coding began. As data was compiled using a constant comparative method, criteria were developed. Appendix C provides the initial open codes, criteria for those codes, and sample participant responses associated to those codes. Table 6 lists the results of the axial coding, or themes, derived from the open codes. All the themes are labeled according to the participants’ language.

Table 6

Axial Coding: High School Themes derived from Open Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Open Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>• Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Risk Taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>• Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>• Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Self-efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>• Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Buy-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>• Relevance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Relationships.** High school participants valued the relationships built with each other over the course of their time together. The peer coaches were described as “highly respected teachers”. The Social Studies teacher commented that he felt comfortable enough to take risks in his classroom when being observed as he believes the peer coach would give honest feedback. Overall, the relationships among all teachers in the high school were described as positive. The Peer Coach commented that “the change and the connection with people and the things we’re trying and the comfortableness since when I started to the district to like what we have now is tremendous.” Participants described the desire to stay together as one PLC as they have gotten to know each other and wish to remain unified.

The positive relationships were not free of trials. The group valued trust, communication, and unity. However, as stated in the Ownership section of the first research question, the strained relationship between the administration and teachers on who is really driving the professional development in the PLC has affected some relationships. “Sometimes,” the former Peer Coach explained, “it depends who is in the role” and “if I don’t have a great relationship with that person, sometimes I don’t understand, and then I check out.” Furthermore, the former Peer Coach put it succinctly, “There’s got to be trust you know- it’s awkward at times.”

**Collaboration.** The group recounted working on inter-curricular units and rubrics, whole-school motivational activities for students, student engagement, and even rearranged their schedules to make events happen for students. When there is an issue the Math Teacher stated, “We find a way to tackle it.” The Mentor commented that “it’s really nice having other teachers to work with so that way we can figure that out, what’s working and what’s not working and be successful...We’re very fortunate to have all of us together as a team.” The tone of voice when participants were explaining their collaborative efforts was joyful.
Ownership. Participants’ tones of voice shifted to one of disappointment and frustration when they felt they were pressured to focus on certain mandates. It is not surprising that Ownership surfaced as a major theme related to the research question regarding a coherent system’s impacts on teacher-teacher leader engagement, as it was also a theme in understanding the alignment of rationales. The themes of collaboration and ownership appeared simultaneously during the data analysis of the transcriptions, so much that a finding is that collaboration was associated ownership: the idea is the decision on what to collaborate on needs to be owned by the group taking the action. As described in the previous section on Ownership, it is evident that this puts the PLC Facilitator in a very difficult position, impacting relationships with other team members. The researcher attempted to contact the current and previous high school Facilitators, but one did not return communication, and the other respectfully declined an interview commenting on the negativity of the year. The Social Studies teacher offered this final statement in his interview that summarizes this debacle:

When teachers get the ability to lead, like what's on the agenda, I feel like we've put out some really good things through Q Comp, and it's when, you know, we get bogged down with some of the state mandates, or district mandates or whatever. When we have a voice in helping shape some of those mandates, we have ownership of it, or a stake in the game. Like we can live with that; we can work through that. But when it's kind of forced down the pike — 'This is what you’re going to do'— it's just, it's absent, it honestly drains any value.

Relevance. This statement by the Social Studies teacher underscored the theme of relevance. All high school participants (teachers, teacher-leaders, Principal, and Coordinator) mentioned that it is very difficult for a PLC with such diverse members, all from different
subject areas from band to science, to find specific tasks relevant for all members. The relevance of the tasks directly impacted the productivity and focus of the group, but relevance was the initial word used repeatedly during analysis. The Social Studies teacher observed that the group’s root cause analysis pointed to student engagement as a unifying issue on which the group could focus. The group has split into smaller groups (math and science, and social studies and English) to focus on subject specific tasks and has continued to try this method on a variated schedule.

Irrelevance was also mentioned by both the Coordinator and participants regarding the state accountability data (MCA-III) used to track and measure progress in such a small school. The validity of the data was questioned, and issue was raised with the fact that there exists a large amount of variance from one student cohort to the next to track yearly progress; rather a growth model was suggested to be more realistic.

Relevance of feedback from peer coaches seemed to be in the eye of the beholder. Most stated the peer coaches provided relevant feedback, while one argued that it varied. This teacher also viewed the peer coaches as a non-collaborative position and functioned in an administrative format.

Culture. Despite the complications and improvements needed as cited by the participants, the culture was indicative of continuous improvement. The fact that the teachers speak so passionately about owning their learning and growth indicates the seriousness of continuous improvement efforts. The Mentor stated they are “very supportive teachers.” The former Peer Coach stated that “people still get on board with trying to improve things,” seeking their own growth and that of the students and school. Some egalitarian remarks were made, and while it is an influencer of the culture, teachers seemed to be overall unified despite this occurrence.
**Predominant Finding.** A synthesis of these themes and the findings from the first research question is needed to answer the second research question, “How does the coherence of a system of leadership impact classroom teachers’ abilities to engage with formal teacher leaders?” Though the rationales of all the parties regarding the system of teacher leadership were in alignment (collaboration and unity aimed to increase teacher and student improvement), it was quickly revealed that how participants envisioned the roles to be executed was not always what was always happening in reality. This seemingly small breakdown seemed to affect the buy-in and followership of some teachers. Collaboration and ownership became intermingled and put excess pressure on the position of the PLC facilitator, resulting in tension being felt throughout the group. Despite the tension in ownership and relevance, there were citations of large-scale collaboration and positive engagement with teacher leaders. The relationship between Research Question 1 (alignment) and teacher-teacher leader engagement is outlined in Figure 7.

**Research Question 3**

The third research question was “How does the coherence of a system of teacher leadership impact classroom teachers’ abilities to implement instructional changes?” From the scenario described by the high school participants, it would seem that the high school teachers, teacher leaders, and administration were in agreement about the rationale and purpose of the system, however ownership was a driving factor that led to incongruence between the expectations of the teacher leader roles and what was experienced. Teacher leaders were also reported to have varied in their leadership styles, which, according to participants, may be driven by the teacher leaders’ philosophies of leadership.

Teachers were asked to reflect upon specific changes they have implemented into their classrooms recently. Among the responses were: continual changes when teaching new subject
areas; becoming more inter-curricular; using the same language between teachers; reinforcing academic language; implementing complex discussions; using technology and implementing protocols due to COVID restrictions; implementing more word problems in math; and becoming more student-centered. Again, the specific items the Q Comp Coordinator listed as having been implemented (breaking down standards, getting at the right DOK [Depth of Knowledge] level, learning targets, success criteria, best practices with formative assessment versus summative assessment) were not identified directly, but the overarching priorities of meeting the needs of students and being student-centered were. The Social Studies teacher mentioned breaking down standards as a top down mandate and labeled it “the worst hour of the week.” To answer the third research question, it is evident teachers are passionate about collaborating with each other to address student needs and agree this is the purpose of a system of teacher leadership, and indeed, collaboration resulting in changes in instruction did manifest, but how they collaborate and what is collaborated on is a point of contention.

Reverse Validation. The same form of validation was applied by asking in reverse order the changes in teachers’ instruction and who or what influenced those changes. Three teachers stated that the needs of students influenced their instructional decisions most, with the Social Studies Teacher stating feedback and collaborating with peers was the most influential.

When asked to further prioritize the influencers of administration, students, or peers, the results were mixed. The Math Teacher prioritized students first based on their needs and longed for peer interaction with job-alike colleagues outside of the school. The Social Studies Teacher’s prioritized order was engagement with peer coaches first, engagement with students, then administration last. The former Peer Coach took a more practical approach and stated,
I really like to work with my peers, but at some point, I would say admin have a higher priority. If the admin said you need to start covering this, then I would ditch some collaborative thing with another teacher and I would do it.

He listed students first, administration second, and peers last. The Mentor found it difficult to prioritize and instead described the relationship between them as equal:

They all kinda fit together and without one it doesn’t work I don’t think… Students are number one, but I can’t meet the student’s needs if I don’t have the support of my teachers and if I’m not growing and becoming a better teacher… I’ve got to change to meet the student’s needs. I can’t do that alone. And then ultimately in order for teachers to be successful we need that structure that administration provides, and without that structure and that core we can’t do our jobs.

Overall, students influenced decisions first, then interactions with peers or other teacher leaders, and then administration. In order to meet the student’s needs, the high school seems to have more variation on how those needs should be met, who they should collaborate with, and what should be the focus of collaboration.

**Predominant Finding.** A major finding of this study is that in the high school, the rationale for the system of teacher leadership aligned at first, however teachers and teacher leaders emphasized the idea of teacher ownership in the process. Next to students, peers were the most influential factor on teachers’ decision making and teachers articulated changes in their practice. Additionally, a positive, supportive, culture was present, however ownership of professional development activities remained a point of discussion. The agreed upon portion of the purpose of the system of teacher leadership (from Research Question 1) was to foster collaboration for the good of the students, happened periodically as evidenced by the themes
found in Research Question 2 and was further validated by the descriptions of instructional changes and admittance to peers, including teacher leaders, being a major influencer in teachers’ decision making. However, the teachers’ and teacher leaders’ addition of ownership to the purpose of the teacher leadership system permeated the negative conversations regarding teacher leadership and professional development. It seemed when ownership and relevance were not felt, teacher-teacher leader engagement was low, and teachers took it upon themselves to examine their instruction and implement changes of their own accord. This relationship between the findings of Research Question 1, 2, and 3 is demonstrated in Figure 7.

**Synthesis**

The results of both the elementary and high school are organized by research question. The synthesis was conducted by comparing the findings of both the elementary (see Figure 6) and high school (see Figure 7) settings simultaneously.

**Research Question 1**

Research question 1 was, “How do the rationales of teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators regarding teacher leadership in their school align?” First formal roles of teacher leadership needed to be defined and understood between the researcher and participants. The participants mentioned several informal roles, then collectively and accurately described the roles within Q Comp, and were in alignment with the district’s Q Comp Plan (Seagren, 2010). The Peer coach was mentioned and described uniformly by all participants in the study, the Coordinator and Mentors were not mentioned by everyone, but were described accurately, and the Oversight Committee was mentioned the least with reservation as to their purpose. The high school differed the most on their description of the PLC Facilitator stating that the Facilitator “was not a leadership position” but “ended up leading anyway”.
Next, the rationales regarding the system of teacher leadership were analyzed. The elementary and high school teachers, teacher leaders, and Principal were all in alignment. The rationale was that the purpose of teacher leadership is for teachers to collaborate in order to increase teacher and student improvement. The high school added an emphasis of unity in their rationale. Both the elementary and high school participants, Q Comp Coordinator, and Principal described changes since the initial implementation of the system of leadership and how it has progressively improved.

Then the status of teacher leaders on a spectrum from teacher-like to administrator-like was examined. The Q Comp Coordinator and Principal formally recognized the positions as teachers. The Coordinator recognized she is a teacher as well but has administrator-like duties. All participants in the study recognized the Q Comp Coordinator as an administrator-like. The elementary participants unanimously and convincingly described teacher leaders (Peer Coaches, PLC Facilitators, and Mentors) to be teacher-like and on a level playing field. The high school teachers produced mixed results. Though the high school teachers understood the teacher leaders are supposed to be teacher-like, a hierarchy was mentioned; one teacher labeled the peer coach as having an administrative purpose; and one teacher mentioned that it depended on the teacher in the position and their leadership style. The principal also recognized that different teacher leaders had different leadership styles, resulting in different outcomes.

Finally, the issue of ownership of the PLC meeting agendas was examined. All elementary participants described shared ownership of the direction of the PLC. While they recognized the administration’s role in setting the overall direction, they were receptive to this and felt the Facilitator performed her job of balancing the needs of the teachers and directives well. The issue of ownership of PLC meetings in the high school was a point of
contention that was articulated by all high school teachers and teacher leaders. The Q Comp Coordinator helped to steer the direction, but was not received well by the teachers, putting the Facilitator in a difficult position.

The predominant findings and answers to the research question was that when the rationales and nuances aligned in the elementary, harmony and productivity resulted. In the high school, the rationales aligned, but the nuances were not carried out in accordance with what was expected and while there were times of great productivity, strife was felt as well.

**Research Question 2**

The second research question was, “How does the coherence of a system of leadership impact classroom teachers’ abilities to engage with formal teacher leaders?” The data from the interviews was analyzed to form themes. In the elementary, the aligned rationale of the system of teacher leadership existed simultaneously and in a positive manner with themes of relationships, collaborative efforts of teachers, culture of the elementary, and productivity of the teachers. There were no engagement issues described from either teachers or teacher leaders.

The analysis of the high school interview data produced similar themes that were present: relationships, collaboration, ownership, relevance, and culture. In the high school, the rationales initially aligned but positive and negative results were reported in regard to these themes. Collaboration and strong relationships manifested when the teachers felt ownership and relevance to the tasks at hand. Interaction with teacher leaders under these conditions were mixed; some teachers were fully engaged and implemented ideas while others were not and reported disengagement.

**Research Question 3**
The third research question was, “How does the coherence of a system of teacher leadership impact classroom teachers’ abilities to implement instructional changes?” Teachers were asked to reflect upon changes to their instruction and discern who or what influenced those decisions. All participants listed changes made. The elementary teachers reported that while students had the greatest impact on instructional decisions, peers and teacher leaders were the next influential, and administrators last. The high school participant’s results were more varied: one individual ranked peers first rather than students; the overall second influencer was a mix of all three categories; and the last influencer was the administration. It was evident that teachers placed peers and teacher leaders as more influential than administration when making instructional decisions, which aligned to their rationales for a system of teacher leadership: that peers would collaborate to affect teacher development and student outcomes.

The answer to the research question is that in the elementary when a more tightly coherent system was present teachers implemented instructional changes with more reported support and ease. In the high school, teachers implemented instructional changes as suggested by others more willingly when more coherence was present.

Summary

The findings of this study are that while rationales are were aligned in both the elementary and high school, nuances were present in how reality aligned with the rationales in the high school. Teachers were smoothly engaged with teacher leaders in the elementary. High school teachers reported times when it was difficult to engage with teacher leaders and times when there was productivity and related these times to when collaboration, ownership, and relevance were high. And finally, second to students, teachers associated peers and teacher
leaders as most influential on their instructional decisions over administration, aligning with their rationales for a system of teacher leadership.

Many implications, conclusions, and practical suggestions and can be drawn from these findings. These will be discussed in Chapter 5. Furthermore, the researcher will discuss and interpret the findings and relate them to the literature review and the theoretical framework. The researcher will also perform a self-critique of the study, discuss limitations, make suggestions for future research, and provide concluding thoughts.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion

Introduction

The coherence of a system of teacher leadership was examined through the perspectives of the principal, teacher leaders, and teachers in one small, rural school in this study. The focus of this chapter is a discussion of the aggregated results of those perspectives this study captured. Broadly, the purposes of Chapter 5 are to: evaluate the results of the study, conclude whether or not the study answered the research questions and addressed the need of the study; make comparisons to the previous research; make practical implications for use in the field of educational leadership and related fields; provide the researcher’s self-evaluation of the study as a whole; and make recommendations for future research.

Specifically, Chapter 5 begins with a brief summary of the study including the need for and significance of the study, the literature reviewed, the methodology used, and a recapitulation of the findings. Following the summary, the results are discussed in light of the research questions. The next section, conclusions based on the results, will include a comparison of the findings with the theoretical framework and previous literature, as well as an interpretation of the findings. The researcher will then discuss the limitations, delimitations, and implications of the
study regarding practical applications to the field of educational leadership. Finally, the researcher will make recommendations for future research, note personal growth from this endeavor, and offer concluding thoughts.

**Summary of Results**

The need for this study was derived directly from the research problem, or broader context in which this study lied. A demand for an increase in student outcomes, and subsequent teacher practice, has put capacity-exceeding pressure on administrators and teachers. Widely, systems of teacher leadership developed to address this need. However, systems operate differently, and the people within those systems may hold differing perspectives regarding the purpose and outcomes of the system based on their experiences (Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

The need for this study (see Chapter 1, pp. 6–9) was to examine these different perspectives, particularly among teachers, teacher-leaders, and principals in order to understand how their rationales regarding the overall teacher leadership system align, how this alignment (or lack thereof) subsequently affects teachers’ interactions with teacher leaders, and how the alignment ultimately impacts teachers’ abilities to implement changes in their classrooms. Taken as a whole, this study examined the coherence of a system. As Biddle (1979) described role theory and structural functionalism, the underlying function of a system as perceived and observed by its participants influences the actions of those participants, and those actions may cycle back to impact the system itself.

Additionally, this study was needed to fill a void in the research. There were limited studies in the literature review that connected the three perspectives to investigate the coherence of a system of teacher leadership. Furthermore, most studies illuminated the voices of the principals or teacher leaders themselves, whereas this study aimed to illuminate the voice of the
teachers. The significance of the study (see Chapter 1, pp. 11–13) was that this study may serve as a model for teacher, teacher leaders, and administrators to examine the coherence of their teacher leadership systems. The implications of this study may be used to design whole staff and teacher leader professional development.

Briefly, the literature reviewed spanned several themes regarding organizational and educational leadership. First, the theoretical framework for this study, role theory, was reviewed which encompassed the coherence of roles in terms of role development, enactment, conflict, and resolution (Biddle, 1979, Katz & Kahn, 1978, Turner, 2002). Other related theories such as self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), attribution theory (Weiner, 2010), social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989), and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner 1979) were discussed to give consideration to the multiple facets of sociology and psychology involved in a complex system such as teacher leadership.

Next, the roles of teacher leaders that were included in this study were clarified. This discussion illuminated the spectrum of formal to informal roles teacher leadership systems may encompass (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; NIET, 2018; York-Barr & Duke 2004). The positive and negative outcomes of teacher leadership were then examined. Among the positive facets were increased leadership opportunities and collaboration, and among the negative were increased stress on teacher leaders and conflicts amid the teaching community (Barth, 1999; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Additionally, the literature was reviewed according to the perspectives and influences of the three main roles: principals, teacher leaders, and teachers. The principal’s role was examined regarding their ability to influence coherence through the process of system design, provide support to teacher leaders, communicate with all staff about the system, and develop the culture
to support the enactment of the teacher leader roles (Barth, 1991; Coquyt & Creasman, 2017; DuFour et al., 2016; Hallinger & Heck, 2001, 2003; Lumpkin et al., 2014; Marion & Gonzalez, 2013; Senge, 2006). Teacher leaders’ perspectives were examined and revealed that role ambiguity, role conflict, the support of the principal, and the culture of the school were most influential on their success (Coquyt, 2019; Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015; Weiner, 2011). Most teacher leaders reported downplaying their roles to avoid conflict when giving feedback or leading teams (Mangin, 2005; Smylie & Denny, 2004). Finally, an examination of the perspective of the teachers revealed that interactions with teacher leaders were influenced by their understanding of role expectations, lines of power and authority, their propensity to change, and an awareness of micropolitics (Achinstein, 2002; Bosso, 2017; Flood & Angelle, 2017; Heifitz & Linsky; 2004; Weiner, 2011).

Case study methodology was used in this study to examine the teacher leadership system as a whole through semi structured interviews. While surveys were considered, the reasons behind the answers to the interview questions were needed to collaboratively construct a reality between the research and through the participant lenses, and an opportunity to ask follow-up questions was necessary. The researcher was the primary instrument as data was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted via video conferencing and over the phone. Convenience sampling was used to locate one rural, small school, and snowball sampling was used to locate a principal, and teacher participants which included four teacher leaders, four teachers, and the Coordinator for the district’s Q Comp system.

Data analysis followed that of Merriam and Tisdell’s (2016) and Creswell and Poth’s (2018) methodology for case studies. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher and analyzed using a system of open and axial coding in which reasoning moved from a deductive
process to an inductive process, and themes increased in abstraction. The findings were that the elementary participant’s visions closely aligned, role expectations aligned with behaviors, teachers and teacher leaders engaged productively, a culture of support and growth was noted, and teachers described instructional changes were influenced first by student needs however interaction with peers and teacher leaders was impactful (see Figure 6). The high school results revealed that while the rationales of teacher leadership aligned between the principal, teacher leaders, and teachers, teachers valued ownership and unity and inferred these as an additional part of their vision of teacher leadership. Participants reported that engaging with teacher leaders and implementing instructional change was at its highest when the tasks were relevant, and the teachers felt they had ownership of decisions (see Figure 7). As a whole, the elementary and high school participants indicated they made instructional decisions based on the needs of their students first, then based on interactions with peers and teacher leaders, stating influence from administration was last.

Discussion of the Results

Three progressive research questions framed this study. Briefly, the questions began with the investigation of a shared vision of teacher leadership, examined the impact on teacher and teacher leader engagement, and how the coherence of the system impact classroom teachers’ abilities to implement instructional changes. The results of the study clearly indicated that the shared vision of a system does matter as nuances in this vision can permeate other areas of the system including enactment of roles, engagement between roles, and the outcomes of the system (as described in Figure 3). The results of this study formed two contrasting scenarios, the elementary and the high school, and demonstrated how two different groups in the same system
differed slightly from the same initial vision and philosophy, manifested issues related to roles, and differed in outcomes of the system.

Factors impacting the results will be discussed in detail in the interpretation of the results section of this chapter. However, as is characteristic of qualitative case studies, context is a factor that influences the results (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Two primary contextual factors included the turnover of the elementary staff, and that elementary teachers have more content in common than do high school teachers. Participants with longevity in the elementary setting stated the presence of resistance to change and teacher leadership prior to the turnover. Biddle (1979) stated that the cohesiveness and age of the group, in terms of hours and frequency spent together, may impact the group’s strongly held norms or values and beliefs which in turn may impact the amount of role conflict. Similarly, Achinstien (2002) found tight knit groups demonstrated micropolitics that were not conducive to change whereas groups with turnover and some conflict were more open to change.

**Conclusions Based on the Results**

Conclusions based on the results of this study will be delineated in two sections. First, the findings from each setting, elementary and high school, will be compared with role theory and will be drawn from these comparisons. Then, following the structure of the literature review, the elementary and high school findings will be compared simultaneously to the literature regarding the principal, teacher leaders, and teachers and conclusions drawn from this side-by-side approach.

**Comparison of the Findings with the Framework**

*Role Theory*
This study concerned the alignment of rationales of a system of teacher leadership, how this alignment affected engagement between teachers and teacher leaders, and how these factors affected teacher’s abilities to implement instructional changes. In order to draw conclusions from the findings, the findings were first examined through the lens of role theory, the theoretical framework for this study. A substantial overview of role theory was provided in Chapter 2 (pp. 21–31). Role theory will first be described succinctly then applied to the elementary and high school findings. Conclusions will then be drawn from both elementary and high school findings.

Briefly, role theory offers a lens through which the behaviors of the individual and the collectivity can be studied within a single framework, such as the roles contained within a system of teacher leadership (Biddle 1979). Roles are designed to have a function and are enforced through shared expectations for the role’s behavior. Role theory assumes a participant in a system holds a mental model for a particular role based on his or her understanding of the function and expectations of the role. Participants in the system make comparisons to other roles to differentiate between them. Finally, participants behave in accordance to how their beliefs or mental models align with the role expectations and how the role is manifested through engagements with the role holder, resulting in either role coherence or role conflict.

The initial investigation in this study of rationales (functions) of the system of teacher leadership as a whole was integral to understanding part of the mental models (behaviors and expectations) that principals, teachers, and teacher leaders themselves cast onto teacher leaders. A breakdown of role coherence may result if participants could not agree on the very function of the system of teacher leadership. Regardless of the role expectations written down on paper, role conflicts could eminently arise between actors in the system. These conflicts could subsequently impact the behaviors of members in the system as resolution efforts would take place, and
ultimately affect the outcomes of the system, in this case, teacher development. Role conflict would attempt to be reduced through resolution processes on the part of the role holder, individuals who interact with the role, and the larger group. Factors that influence this process are role indoctrination, legitimacy, saliency, longevity and cohesiveness of the group, consensus of expectations, and how well sanctions are tolerated.

**Role Theory and Elementary Findings**

The findings of this study suggested the elementary participants’ and the Principal’s rationales regarding the system of teacher leadership aligned, signifying they agreed on the function the teacher leader roles were to fulfill. Role coherence was demonstrated as the elementary participants and Principal demonstrated a high degree of consensus as they identified and described the roles in the formal system of teacher leadership (Q Comp) consistently. Furthermore, when elementary participants were asked to compare teacher leadership roles on a spectrum of teacher-like to administrator-like qualities, they consistently and emphatically stated they were teacher-like. Moreover, legitimacy and saliency of roles were demonstrated as teachers seemed to accept the role of the Coordinator as influencing the overall direction of the PLC, while the PLC facilitator balanced the immediate needs of the PLC members and still incorporated district direction. Likewise, legitimacy and saliency of the peer coach role was demonstrated as the teachers valued the feedback from the peer coach and felt the role was enacted according to shared expectations. Neither role conflict nor role ambiguity was evident in the elementary.

The coherence of the teacher leadership system in the elementary was further legitimized as teachers and teacher leaders listed collaboration with peers and teacher leaders as the second most influential factor in their instructional decision making, next to students. This finding added
value to the teacher leadership roles and validated the significance of the rationale of teacher leadership (to collaborate) in the first place. Teachers were also able to cite changes in their practice as a result of experiences within the teacher leadership system as a whole.

Factors that may account for the coherence of the elementary included evidence of a culture of collaboration and support, trusting relationships, localized ownership of the direction of the PLC, and relevance of the related work. The recent teacher turnover in the elementary provided evidence of the indoctrination of the roles into the structure of the school system, as these teachers could learn of these roles without being informed explicitly. Furthermore, the turnover weakened prior held beliefs regarding teacher leadership and allowed for a culture of support and collaboration to manifest.

**Role Theory and High School Findings**

A preface to the discussion regarding the application of role theory to the high school findings must be clearly stated to elevate the voice of the teachers: Although the findings did indicate role conflict was present and instances where a lack of coherence existed, on a whole, the participants did not feel that overall the system was faulty, but that it did have merit. Positive messages of unity, collaboration, enjoyment, and productivity did surface when ownership, relevance, and role coherence were high. However, participants expressed their suggestions for improvement of the system of teacher leadership. The discussion at hand delves into why times of role conflict and a lack of coherence may have manifested through the lens of role theory.

The high school findings of this study suggested that the high school teachers’, teacher leaders’, and the principal’s rationales for the system of teacher leadership aligned in that the functions were to promote collaboration among teachers, to promote teacher growth, and ultimately impact student achievement. However, teachers and teacher leaders emphasized unity
and ownership in their rationales alongside collaboration, therefore the very function of the system of teacher leadership had a nuanced difference between groups. Throughout the data analysis, it became evident high school teachers and teacher leaders began to associate collaboration with ownership and relevance of the work at hand. The function of the system of teacher leadership, as evidenced by this nuance from teacher leaders and teachers throughout the interviews, then became to collaborate in self-driven, unified, ways for the betterment of teachers and students.

The analysis of role coherence further illuminated this finding. Variation existed in the ways in which high school teachers described the roles of the teacher leaders leading to role ambiguity. The most significant instance was the discrepancy of the PLC Facilitator being described as not a leader, yet leading anyway, and the dichotomy of the PLC facilitator’s purpose between implementing district initiatives and balancing teacher priorities. The Coordinator recognized this phenomenon and interpreted it by stating the high school teachers did not agree on the purpose of a PLC and teachers wanted a high amount of autonomy and control over the PLC. The principal further recognized that it was difficult to find focus and relevance with such a large group of teachers from different content areas. While not all experiences high school teachers and teacher leaders reported were negative, this dichotomy was recognized by all participants. In terms of role theory, the function of the PLC facilitator role was not agreed upon, leaving teachers with questions of how their vision of unity and ownership was to be fulfilled by the facilitator. Role conflict was evident in terms of legitimacy, or the correctness of the behaviors associated with expectations of the role, however the role was evidently salient as all participants recognized its importance to the function of the system. The legitimacy of the role underwent higher amounts of scrutiny because the role was so salient.
Participants in a system compare roles with others to differentiate their functions and expectations. When high school participants were asked to examine the teacher leader roles based on teacher-like or administrative-like qualities, overall, teacher leaders were described as teacher-like. One participant, however, described the peer coach position as functioning in an administrative capacity, rather than a collaborative one, and found varied value in the feedback given. This participant’s internalized purpose and expectations behind the peer coach position was not in alignment as he envisioned a completely different protocol, or set of tasks, to take place between the coach and teachers. Clearly for this participant, intra-role conflict was present as behaviors in real time did not align with his mental model. The group as a whole did not come to this consensus, however the voice of the teachers are to be elevated in this study.

Another participant, a former peer coach, asserted that it mattered who was in the role of a teacher leader and their leadership style. Teacher leaders’ leadership styles could be logically derived from their philosophies of teacher leadership, understandings of the associated expectations and function, their reasons for being a teacher leader, and the contexts in which they are leading. Moreover, role theory would probe deeper into the mind of the teacher leaders as they may be experiencing a myriad of sanctions from their superiors and from their peers, reacting to their sensitivity to cathexis (feelings, values, and desires), and value of rewards (financial, esteem, privilege, etc.). The Principal echoed the account for individuality when she said teacher leaders had different leadership styles and set the tone for the group. When the behaviors of these other leaders did not align with this participant’s, the participant’s engagement with that leader declined. On the behalf of the participant, role conflict was relieved not by changing behavioral expectations or beliefs, but by removing one’s self from the situation through lack of engagement. According to the high school participants, it would seem teacher
leaders are to foster collaboration through shared ownership of decisions that produce relevant tasks. When a lack of relevance was present, the high school participants experienced role conflict as the teacher leader was not able to fulfill what the participants believed to be the function of the teacher leader.

Another role that seemed to garner attention in the interviews was that of the Coordinator. The role is not an administrative role by design according to the Q Comp Plan (Seagren, 2010), but is associated with administration by all participants of the study because of the function of the role as a keeper and enforcer of rules and regulations. Though the role was regarded with a high amount of salience, it was in conflict with teacher’s strongly held beliefs of unity and ownership underpinning the reason for the teacher leadership system’s existence.

Productivity, or outcomes, was assumed in the rationale of the system of teacher leadership and labeled teacher development and student outcomes. While teachers did cite changes in their instruction, most high school participants associated those changes as pertaining to students’ needs first. The second overall influencer on teacher’s instruction was peers, including teacher leaders, followed by administration. Despite the variation within the high school group of participants as to this order, this finding legitimized and added saliency to the roles of teacher leaders and validated the overall rationale and value of the system of teacher leadership.

**Summary Based on Role Theory**

The comparison with and examination of the results through the lens of role theory revealed the interplay between the coherence of a shared vision or function of the system of teacher leadership and its roles; how those roles are enacted; and how teachers engage with those roles based on the shared vision and expectations of those roles. Regarding the elementary, the
function of the system and the expectations of the roles aligned, were enacted in accordance with those expectations, and teachers reported high levels of engagement and productivity. Role conflict was not mentioned or found in the elementary.

Regarding the high school, the function of the system was mostly aligned, save for the additions of unity and ownership. Largely, role ambiguity was evident in the descriptions of the PLC facilitator, resulting in intra-role conflict and varied levels of engagement between the facilitator role and the participants. One account of role conflict was present regarding the peer coach role and had a profound impact on the engagement of the participant with the peer coach. Through deductive logic, when productivity (changes in teacher practice) was high, collaboration was also high. At the same time, the group felt more ownership and relevance in the tasks, therefore the teacher leaders were fulfilling the teacher’s expectations of promoting collaboration and unity for the benefit of teachers and students, which fulfilled the philosophy and rationale of the system of teacher leadership.

One can logically conclude through a lens of role theory that a coherent system, (shared and met expectations of roles), produces more positive engagement between members of the system (less role conflict) and influences productivity (function and purpose of the system). For the leadership community, applying a lens of role theory may illuminate characteristics indicative of a coherent system.

Comparison of the Findings with Previous Literature

The literature review conducted in Chapter 2 was organized first by themes that spanned across the literature regarding teacher leadership including defining roles, outcomes, and structure of teacher leadership. The literature review was then organized according to the perspectives of the participants who were the focus of this study: principals, teacher leaders, and
teachers. Each of those categories were further broken into issues and influences on the role of teacher leadership and the culture surrounding teacher leadership. Comparisons of the findings with the previous literature will be organized by the initial themes in the literature review then the three categories of participants. The elementary and high school findings will be compared side-by-side in each section.

Elementary and high school participants, and the Principal, were asked to describe teacher leadership roles they have held in their buildings, or of which they were aware. Consistent with the findings of York-Barr and Duke (2004) and NIET (2018) that teacher leadership is inconsistently defined, participants identified a variety of roles from informal to formal. Participants did describe roles that went above and beyond the regular duties of teachers which is consistent among all literature regarding teacher leadership. The researcher needed to guide participants to focus on formal teacher leadership roles that were a part of the formal Q Comp Program.

Among the dimensions of teacher leaders Harris and Mujis (2004) defined, being a broker of ideas and effective practices to others, using their knowledge of the craft to help interpret improvement plans, and forging close relationships with other teachers were also apparent in this study. In the elementary, it appeared the PLC facilitator helped interpret the improvement plans, the peer coach forged close relationships with other teachers, and both brokered ideas and effective practices to other teachers. In the high school, it appeared the teacher leaders attempted to broker ideas and effective practice to others and interpret improvement plans, however the receptivity to these actions varied by teacher. These dimensions seemed to resemble top-down mandates too closely for some participants. However, overall,
relationships became closer in the high school as a result of the collaboration through the system of teacher leadership.

Anderson (2004) depicted three models of systemic teacher leadership relationships: buffered, contested, and interactive. The interactive model most closely resembled the relationships in the elementary. The principal, coordinator, teachers, and teacher leaders seemed to work together in a cooperative manner. The buffered model most closely resembled the relationships in the high school. The teacher and teacher leaders worked more closely together with each other than the principal or coordinator, and teacher leaders seemed to be in a position between the teachers and administration.

**Role of the Principal**

According to a plethora of researchers, the roles of the principal in systems of teacher leadership were to shape the context by allocating resources, foster the skills of the teacher leaders, promote coherence of expectations, and most importantly, create a shared vision and conducive culture for teacher leadership (Barth, 1991; Biddle, 1979; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Buller, 2015; DuFour et al., 2016; Fullan, 2016; Guenert & Whitaker, 2005; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Krile et al., 2006; Liethwood et al., 2007; Marion & Gonzalez, 2013; Senge, 2006; Senge et al., 2012; Turner, 2002). In this district, by design, the principal did not fulfill all these needs, rather, the Q Comp Coordinator provided the professional development of the teacher leaders and established expectations for the role when teacher leaders stepped into the role. Again, by design, the Principal was placed in a supportive role to shape the culture of the building by supporting the teachers in their endeavors. According to all the teachers and teacher leaders interviewed, neither the Principal nor the Coordinator engaged in recent conversation with the whole staff regarding shared expectations of the teacher leaders.
Liethwood et al. (2007) provided a spectrum in which roles, vision, and behaviors are synchronized, ranging from planful alignment to anarchic misalignment. It seemed the district utilized planful alignment, however, as Fullan (2009), stated, alignment is on paper, rather coherence is the shared depth of understanding about the purpose and nature of the work and is a continual process that may take time and a revision of plans (Fullan, 2009; 2016). This school is naturally in a continual process of reflection and coherence making as high school participants indicated that conversations with administration pertaining to coherence have taken place.

Regarding training, teacher leaders may lack a framework and understanding of change, conflict, and complex systems (Cooper et al., 2016; Dozier, 2007). Teacher leaders from the high school and elementary did mention some professional development in regard to conflict management, the teacher evaluation rubric, and how to document change efforts. Teachers’ and teacher leaders’ depth of understanding of change and complex systems was not mentioned.

Teacher leadership is part of a complex system that is often characteristic of distributed leadership. According to Spillane, (2006) distributed leadership is more than delegation, but a complex system in which power and authentic decision making are distributed among members of the system. In teacher leadership systems, unclear lines of authority may manifest, therefore measures should be in place to ensure teacher leaders are perceived as teachers and not administrators (Coquyt & Creasman, 2017). The elementary findings did not indicate lines of power and authority were an issue, however this was mentioned in the high school. The former Peer Coach mentioned the system had a “hierarchy” to it, but the Social Studies teacher stated that specifically the PLC Facilitator “has been really good at not grabbing power that would be pretty easy to grab at times.” To further demonstrate the skewed lines, the Math Teacher associated the peer coach position as having an administrative function, yet the Mentor firmly
described the teacher leaders as more teacher-like and equals, not associated with administration.

All high school and elementary participants agreed that the Coordinator was in a position of power, but how much of this power was shared with the Principal did not seem clear to the participants.

Researchers agreed that implementing new roles will cause disruption to a system creating a need for all those in the system to re-examine their own roles, personal beliefs, and philosophies as they engage in sense making together (Biddle, 1979; Fullan, 2018; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Senge, 2006; Turner, 2002). In other words, what the high school went through was natural and a part of a transition process. The elementary also underwent this process but was accelerated by teacher turnover.

The issues of power and authority coincide with the issue of ownership regarding the decisions of the work at hand. Katz and Kahn (1978) explained that power and control, sanctions, and conformity form the basis for the operations of an organization, but organizations are also social systems comprised of individuals who have their own needs. Ownership, authority, autonomy, and motivation are all complex, related psychological phenomenon and require leaders to have knowledge of multiple organizational leadership and social psychology theories. Marion and Gonzales (2013) discussed the evolution and mixture of these theories and concluded that modern leaders sought to achieve control without appearing to do so. Fullan (2011; 2016) suggested in order to do this, leaders must appeal to employees’ moral imperatives. According to Ryan and Deci’s (2000; Deci, 2017) self-determination theory, employees worked best when they operated under autonomous rather than controlled motivation. Furthermore, according to Knowles’ (1978) theory of andragogy, adult learning needs to be relevant, practical, autonomous or self-directed, and experiential. Moreover, in a simplified description, Weiner
(2010) explained that in attribution theory, when people perceive they possess the locus of control in situations and for outcomes, they are more likely and willing to change their behaviors. Finally, Fullan (2011) harnessed the power of influence from like-group individuals (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and suggested that leaders use the group to change the group.

The findings of this study indicated that the elementary and high school participants believed in helping each other improve in order to see students improve, but the elementary seemed to feel more autonomy than control. This finding was consistent with that of Jacques et al. (2016) when National and State Teachers of the Year were interviewed and found teacher leaders seemed to care for their students and each other, wanting everyone to succeed, including themselves. The culture that developed in the elementary was one of support, collaboration, ownership, relevance, continuous learning. The topics and measures that determined productivity seemed to align with district initiatives and teacher-determined needs. The high school findings suggested that while there was a culture of continuous learning, support, and collaboration, ownership and relevance were an issue. When high school participants felt top-down pressure, they may have demonstrated more controlled motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000), placed the locus of control outside of themselves (Weiner, 2010), and felt learning was not self-directed or relevant (Knowles, 1978).

The role of the principal of the system in this study was, by design, one of support and not direct interaction with the PLCs or peer coaching process, leaving those responsibilities to the Coordinator. A conclusion can be drawn that the initial philosophies and actions of the administration (Coordinator and Principal), whether directly stated by the administration or perceived by the teachers, influenced the operations of the system of teacher leadership including
role coherence, the ability and conditions for teachers to interact with one another, and their propensity to implement certain changes in their teaching.

**Perspective of Teacher Leaders**

A finding of this study was the difference in role coherence between the elementary and high school. All teacher leaders in this study were able to clearly define their own status and role expectations. Teacher leaders also mentioned the training they had for their roles but stated the faculty did not have recent training concerning the roles or expectations of the teacher leaders. Elementary participants defined the status and expectations of teacher leaders consistently, however high school participants’ responses varied.

Role ambiguity is not an uncommon phenomenon. Reay et al. (2006) described how nurse practitioners in Canada constantly differentiated their new roles from other roles in the healthcare field, while engaged with patients and other stakeholders, to set themselves apart from other roles and secure legitimacy and saliency. Tajfel and Turner (1979) discussed a similar phenomenon of in-grouping and out-grouping in their studies of social identity theory, which can create an “us versus them” mentality. Similarly, one of Biddle’s (1979) five propositions of role theory is “roles are often associated with sets of persons who share a common identity.” It is natural to place people into groups according to roles, however, Turner (2002) asserted that when people do not have a concrete idea for the responsibilities of a role, people will form their own conceptualizations of what it ought to be, often turning to peers for guidance. A group of teachers for instance, may begin to form similar expectations for teacher leaders. Relatedly, the teacher leaders may form conceptualizations of their own roles by looking to other teacher leaders and teacher peers, as well as administrators. Biddle (1979) declared that until a role can be clarified and legitimized by stakeholders, intra-role conflict may ensue.
When the “us versus them” mentality was evident in previous research, teacher leaders were found to downplay their roles to seem less intrusive and establish trust with teachers (Smylie & Denny, 2004; Struyve et al., 2014; Mangin, 2005). In a similar manner, issues of egalitarianism were prevalent throughout the research. As teacher leaders moved into these new roles, teachers often viewed teacher leaders as “breaking ranks” or moving up the hierarchy and displayed resistance (Barth, 1991).

Elementary teacher leaders in this study did not seem to engage in role downplay as they were confident in their roles and perceived the other teachers to be receptive to their efforts. This symbiotic relationship was confirmed by the elementary teachers as they stated they valued the teacher leaders and spoke highly of them. Likewise, the high school teacher leaders interviewed did not seem to engage in role downplay as they described their roles, places within the system, and interactions with others. The high school teachers did not indicate the presence of role downplay, rather indicated role ambiguity or intra-role conflict. One can conclude that the work of role differentiation and role coherence is not entirely placed upon the principal, but rather can be taken upon by the teacher leaders themselves.

How teacher leadership roles were conceptualized and if these conceptualizations are in alignment with stakeholders was only a starting point in the coherence of the system of teacher leadership. Fullan (2018) stated, it is in the actual works and interactions of actors in the system that coherence can be detected, often manifesting in terms of culture. In this study, ownership was a piece of the original vision for teacher leadership in by high school teachers and therefore was a factor in determining the coherence of the system. Subsequently, how ownership was fostered through the teacher leader roles made an impact on how teachers engaged with the teacher leaders. As evidenced in the high school, it mattered who thought of the ideas for
improvement (administration, teacher leaders, or teachers themselves). The elementary participants already felt ownership and relevance in their system of teacher leadership and as a whole, did not see teacher leaders as separate from the group of teachers. A conclusion can be drawn that the coherence of a system of teacher leadership does impact how teacher leaders and teachers engage with each other.

**Perspective of Teachers**

Aside from natural and significant disruptors such as a natural disaster or a pandemic such as the one caused by COVID-19, research is clear that the decision to change ultimately lies within the individual as one examines his or her needs, the needs of others, personal philosophies, internal and external motivations, individual skills, relationships, and the goals and philosophy of an institution (Bandura, 1989; Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Spillane, 1999; Weiner, 2010). All participants in this study cited changes to their practice and overall considered the needs of their students first, then considered peer and teacher leader interactions and suggestions. Participants in this study who struggled with the task at hand largely found it irrelevant, and as opposites would suggest, those who found relevance in the task, such were more willing to implement it.

Research is also clear that professional development is enhanced when teachers engage in a social context or community of practice (DuFour et al., 2016; Flood & Angelle, 2017; Louis et al. 2013; Shillingstad et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2016; Spillane, 1999). However, it is the combination of nuances in the social context such as presence of collective efficacy (Flood & Angelle, 2017), micropolitics (Achinstein, 2002), egalitarianism, and relationships, and ownership (in sum, culture) that impact the outcome of the system of teacher leadership. The
dichotomy for the teachers is that teachers both create and are influenced by the school’s culture, thus impact the teacher leadership system significantly (Smylie & Denny, 1990).

Most teachers attributed the changes they cited in their practice to engagement with peers and teacher leaders or from student needs. When teachers struggled to engage with teacher leaders, it seemed to coincide with discussions of role conflict, the task being asked of them was irrelevant, or both.

**Summary Based on Previous Literature**

The findings from this study are consistent with the previous literature surrounding teacher leadership. According to the previous research, positive outcomes of a system of teacher leadership included increased teacher participation in and ownership of change initiatives which led to a decrease in resistance to change; increased sense of self and collective efficacy; and increased morale and positive culture (Barth, 2001; Fullan, 2008, Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Conditions that were found to support these outcomes were an established culture of trust and collaboration; skilled and supportive teacher leaders who led beside teachers rather than sought power over them; supportive principals; and sufficient time to collaborate (Barth, 1999; Knight, 2018; Senge et al., 2012; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Overall, participants of this study made it clear during their interviews that they value the opportunity to collaborate and learn from colleagues, the increase in collegiality and supportive relationships, and times of productivity. Both the elementary and high school participants reported feeling ownership and positive culture, however, in the high school it seemed to ebb and flow.

Alternatively, according to previous research, negative outcomes of a system of teacher leadership included power struggles and distrust between teacher leaders and administrators, and between teacher leaders and teachers, between teachers and principals, and subsequent confusion
regarding improvement initiatives and roles (ASCD, 2014; Bosso, 2017; Kraft et al., 2018; Mangin, 2005; Margolis, 2012). Conditions that were found in prior research that contributed to negative factors were a lack principal support, teacher leader training, and trust; conflicting philosophies and beliefs; lack of communication regarding goals, procedures, and roles; forceful, top-down mandates; egalitarian cultures that stifle growth; and teachers’ seniority and autonomy (Blase, & Blase, 2000; Fullan, 2008; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015; Liethwood et al., 2007). While none of these conditions were reported in the elementary, high school participants articulated their concerns and ideas for improvement including the need for increased communication, relevance, and ownership of initiatives. The extent of the Principal’s, and in this case the Coordinator’s, involvement in the collaborative design, implementation, training, and continual guidance had both positive and negative effects on the teacher leadership system. While coherence seemed to have manifested in the elementary, autonomy and ownership seemed to be key issues in the high school impacting the system of teacher leadership. This may be a result of nuances in the shared visions of teacher leadership, instances of role conflict, or a matter of relevance (see Figure 7).

**Interpretation of the Findings**

The findings will be interpreted through the context of the case study in which plausible reasons the study yielded the findings it did are discussed. The findings will also be interpreted through particular points in the prior research and theory that account for the outcomes of the study.

**Contextual Interpretations**

The findings of the study were impacted by the context of the school, as is congruent with the nature of qualitative studies. This school is a very small, rural school with limited
resources including a limited number of teachers. Small, rural schools face unique challenges such as having one teacher per grade level or subject area. Unlike urban or suburban schools, these singleton teachers do not have other grade or subject alike colleagues to collaborate with in the same building, resulting in PLCs consisting of a mixture of grade and content area teachers.

A contributing factor to the difference in results between the elementary and high school in this study may be that although the elementary PLC spanned all grade levels K–6, the teachers were each responsible for all content areas therefore commonality and subsequently, relevance, was easier to achieve. Relevance was more difficult to achieve in the high school as a result of the combination of a large group, a wide variety of content areas, and a perception of narrowed tasks and options in which teachers could participate. The participants did report that the large high school PLC has broken into smaller groups based on task and content area periodically.

Additionally, by design, the principal had limited interaction in the PLC meetings as visiting each group took a long span of time, had limited interaction with the facilitators and peer coaches, and was not involved in the initial or ongoing training of teacher leaders as this was the role of the Coordinator. The Coordinator operates at a district level, and the Principal at a local level. Perhaps the function of the principal overlapped with the function of the Coordinator creating skewed lines of power and control, and a gap in relationships between the Principal, Coordinator, and some teachers or teacher leaders.

The peer coach and PLC facilitator roles were most discussed in this study. The role of the mentor in this district’s teacher leadership system is a formalized role, however attention was drawn to the PLC facilitator and the Peer Coach roles by the participants. This may be because, by design, the mentor role does not observe probationary teachers, rather acted as a casual
support person to orient new teachers to the building. The responsibility of instructional coaching and direction were left to the PLC facilitators and peer coaches.

Consideration was given to the fact that Q Comp programs include a performance pay component. While compensation for the work of the teacher leader is a necessity, teachers may have been concerned about meeting performance expectations for pay and were unwilling to take risks. However, financial concerns were only mentioned by veteran participants as a factor in the initial implementation of the program and was not mentioned as a driving factor by participants.

**Interpretations from the Literature**

The previous literature and theories regarding leadership alluded to the reasons behind the successes and barriers this school faced. The main theory this study utilized was role theory, however leaders should consider a combination of theories in order to understand the complexity of a psycho-social phenomenon such as teacher leadership. Briefly, Katz and Kahn (1978) and Marion and Gonzales (2013) stated that organizations are more complex than a leader setting a directive or creating a role and employees following those expectations. Organizations are complex social systems and actors within those systems respond differently to overt and covert control. Theorists concluded that the more top-down directives are given, the more push-back will be manifested (Marion & Gonzales, 2013). Instead, as Fullan (2016) stated, leaders need to “use the group to change the group”; invoke moral imperatives; and ignite autonomous motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000) Biddle (1979), Katz and Kahn (1978) and Turner (2002) forewarned that the implementation of roles may create role conflict as people examine current roles, philosophies, and functions of the role. Additionally, Knowles (1978) insisted that adult education be relevant, practical, and self-driven. Finally, Whitaker and Gruenert (2005) suggested that before any change take hold, the culture of the building must be developed. The
strategic advice and findings from the literature state that more the visions, roles, and initiatives can be developed jointly with stakeholders, the more stakeholders will feel ownership of them, understand them, justify them to others, and see they succeed.

Participants in the high school reported both ownership and a lack of ownership in their professional development: Teachers had input into the direction of the PLC, igniting autonomous motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000), yet there were still directives that did not seem relevant or practical to all members (Knowles, 1978). A facet of the Q Comp system was to garner more involvement from teachers, creating an element of teacher-led decisions in union with the administration, not to the exclusion of administration. As a result of the issues of shared ownership, the PLC Facilitator role was cast into a dichotomous situation or inherent role conflict (Biddle, 1979). As a result, the high school participants reported that productivity ebbed and flowed.

The culture of the high school seemed to be one dedicated to students but steeped in teacher ownership of how best to meet students’ needs. Ownership and unity could be traced to the highest level of abstraction, teachers’ philosophies a system of teacher leadership. It may be that the shared vision of the system of teacher leadership, roles of all members in the system, not just the facilitator, needed to be revisited to understand these dynamics.

Another factor that may account for the results is that the elementary had recent and significant turnover of teachers. The Coordinator, Principal, and Peer Coach noted this turn-over and correlated it to a positive change in the receptivity of the system of teacher leadership and the culture of the group. According to role theory, the cohesiveness of the group in terms of time spent together to build shared beliefs and strongly held norms was disrupted, allowing new norms and values to be formed (Biddle, 1979). Teacher leader roles were indoctrinated into the
culture of the elementary and those filling the roles behaved in alignment with district and teacher visions (Biddle, 1979). Elementary teachers did not feel overt control, rather felt ownership and relevance in their tasks as they contributed to PLC meetings and valued the feedback of peer coaches, which coincided with Marion and Gonzales’ (2013) analysis of leadership strategies and Ryan and Deci’s (2000) self-determination theory. An appeal to a moral imperative was detected as teachers put the needs of students first, and plainly stated they wanted to see each other succeed (Fullan, 2011).

**Limitations**

Indicative of a qualitative, case study research, the generalizability of this study was bounded by the context of the participants and data gathered (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This case study was to serve as an instrumental case study in which a real-world bounded case was selected to illustrate an issue or concern, in this case the coherence of system of teacher leadership upon teachers’ instruction (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 98). Participants in different contexts, and different roles, may produce different results.

The Principal and the Coordinator in this study described the culture of the elementary and high school and indicated the PLC situation in the high school was indicative of periodic conflict. Interviewing the current or past PLC Facilitator (or both) may have added more clarity and a deeper understanding of social and psychological dynamics of the PLC, allowing the researcher to construct a more complete reality. However, the reports from the participants seemed to align regarding the successes and struggles of the PLC and understanding of the role of the facilitator. Similarly, the superintendent was not interviewed as the study focused on the local triad of the principal, teacher leaders, and teachers. The influence of the Coordinator became evident through the high school participants’ interviews. However, the superintendent
often sets a vision for the district as a whole, and works closely with the principals, which may have influenced the perspective of the principal.

Within this case study, more specific questions that ask participants to link changes in practice, or lack thereof, to a specific coaching session or PLC meeting may add further evidence to the coherence of a system and impact teacher leaders have upon teachers.

**Delimitations**

This study had a particular focus on the coherence of a system of teacher leadership and studied factors related to philosophies, engagement, and practice. However other factors, or delimitations, that if investigated further, may add to the understanding of the issues at hand.

Skilled teacher leaders who understand models of leadership and change are integral for the success of a system of teacher leadership (Knight, 2018; Senge et al., 2012; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). This study did not delve into the impact participant degree levels, credits beyond an initial teaching degree, or district provided training may have had upon a participant’s understanding and philosophy of teacher leadership. Veteran status was mentioned in this study but was not the focus. In this case, the high school Mentor, Social Studies teacher, and former Peer Coach indicated they held multiple licenses and had advanced experiences with leadership opportunities beyond the formal roles associated with Q Comp.

Changes in practice as reported by teachers was a factor in this study. Teachers were asked to generally reflect upon their teaching, describe recent changes in practice, and reflect upon what influenced those changes. This study did not focus on a specific topic or directive that originated from the district level. However, following a specific topic through the viewpoints of the teacher leaders and their ability to be a broker of initiatives, and finally to the classroom
teachers, might have increased the specificity of which directives were enacted and how the coherence of the teacher leadership system played a part in the outcome of those directives.

**Implications of the Study**

The implications of this study include those regarding the theory, the knowledge base of educational leadership, a deepened understanding of teacher leadership in rural schools, and practical implications for the field of leadership. The purpose of this case study was not to formulate new theories, or to prove or disprove a theory, rather a theory was used to aid in the examination of the phenomenon of study. Role theory was the pivotal theory that permeated this study and allowed for a thorough and complex analysis regarding the coherence of the teacher leadership system. Biddle (1979, pp. 11–13) stated, role theory is very versatile as it spans psychology, sociology, and anthropology allowing for the study of individual and collective patterns of behavior and underlying phenomenon. Role theory serves as a wide lens through which systems of teacher leadership can be inspected and could be a starting place for leaders and participants to examine systems. According to the findings of this study, the more congruent the shared vision of the system and of the associated roles was, the more the system functioned smoothly. Furthermore, depending what those initial visions were, in this case ownership, relevance, and collaboration, other complimentary theories from sociology and psychology may be needed to understand the full weight and spectrum of issues. Practically, leaders should consider role theory as an initial lens to examine systems and consider other theories.

This study added to the knowledge base of educational leadership as it filled gaps in the literature. Previous research focused on the voice of the administrator or the teacher leaders themselves, however the voices of the teachers were amplified in this study. Furthermore, to achieve coherence of a system, all relevant voices must be considered. This study included the
perspectives of the principal, teacher leaders, and teachers as well as the coordinator and sought alignment among them as an indicator of coherence. Additionally, most research regarding teacher leadership was conducted in large urban or suburban schools. This study added to the knowledge base of how teacher leadership functioned in a small, rural school and manifested as significant factors of ownership and relevance upon the success of the system.

This study deepened the understanding of teacher leadership, rural schools, and elementary versus high school settings. First, according to the participants, teacher leadership seemed to be a valued system, however a shared vision for the purpose of the system must be continually revisited, especially when conflict is detected. Starting from the highest level of abstraction (i.e., purpose) and systematically investigating the system’s components including roles, leadership theories, and culture, one can begin to find points of interest and determine where to focus improvement efforts. In this study, role conflict could be traced to a slight difference in overall visions of the teacher leadership system and the roles themselves.

Teacher leadership systems are often implemented as a means of professional development and benefit not only the teacher leaders, but the whole faculty. The elementary Peer Coach stated that even though she didn’t have another same grade level teacher to engage with, she could reach out to other schools, but that was not during PLC time and was not as common. She noted that the new teachers wouldn’t know any different and would adjust to a small school setting, learning to use the human resources around them. Similarly, the high school Math Teacher felt a combination of meeting with in-building colleagues and others outside the building would be best. He recognized that building relationships with colleagues in the building is important during PLC time, but at the same time being the only teacher of a subject was lonely; there was no one that could relate to and help with the specific demands of the position:
…Like there is no one doing life with me. It feels like you are doing this race alone. Who is there to celebrate with you when you win? Who is there when you are struggling to encourage you to keep running the race? PLC needs to be that place.

Other participants spoke on behalf of the band director and other teachers stating the same concerns and advocated for differentiated professional development.

Ownership and relevance can also be addressed through differentiated professional development. Differentiated professional development can be included in a system of teacher leadership through leadership opportunities, teacher leadership roles themselves, group settings, and on-on-one coaching situations. The mode of delivery and opportunities may be differentiated, however, approaches to the topics and goals may need to be differentiated to allow the maximum commitment and ownership. The idea of differentiation may be a shift in mental models of professional development, but may create relevance, ownership, and growth for teachers (Fullan, 2016; Harris & Spillane, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2007; Senge, 2006).

An example derived from this study is an urgent data based need to increase reading and math accountability scores drove district goals and signified the need for whole system reform. An examination of pedagogical practices, curricula, and assessments may be in order. While teachers in content areas whose focus is not reading and math, (i.e., music, physical education) can also engage in an examination of pedagogy, curricula, and assessments, they should also be trusted to creatively address the district goals in their disciplines. The role of the teacher leader, according the high school participants in this study, was to fulfill the larger function of creating collaboration, unity, increased teacher development, and student outcomes. Through a differentiated approach, the teacher leader would not be pressured into making mandates upon these other content area teachers, rather invite them to collaborate in meaningful ways.
Furthermore, as expressed by participants in this study, the time and means to network with outside professionals of their choice, discover additional strategies, and examine curricula may benefit each teacher and the system overall (Louis et al., 2013; Shillingstad et al., 2015; Smith et al. 2016; Spillane, 1999). Practically, the action plan that was first conceived in order to meet the function of a system may need to be revisited or adjusted to meet the needs of all stakeholders.

Many practical implications can be made from this study that pertain to educational and organizational leadership and the field of leadership in general. First, teacher leadership is a complex psycho-social system that requires examination from the perspectives of all stakeholders and through various theoretical lenses. Resistance from actors in the system may be a symptom of the depth of coherence of the system. Participants in the system may not be aware they share or hold differing expectations or their degree of consensus (Biddle, 1979). Conversely, when resistance is not present, it is equally important to examine features of the system that may contribute to its success to make comparisons and understand how a coherent system may manifest.

The role of the leader is clear: leaders must engage stakeholders in creating and sustaining a shared vision of teaching and learning, revisiting it frequently, and seeking stakeholder feedback. A shared vision for how the system of teacher leadership supports the vision of teaching and learning is critical. The findings of this study indicated some participants were not fully certain as to the purpose of the system of teacher leadership, and subtle nuances in visions in the high school led to mixed expectations of teacher leader roles. When the purpose is clear and agreed upon by stakeholders, as in the elementary, the outcomes were indicative of coherence and a positive culture. By design, the system of teacher leadership in this study did not include a strong role of the principal as interacting with teacher leaders and teachers about these
issues, rather this responsibility seemed to fall on the Coordinator. All roles in a system may need to be revisited to determine their function in meeting the goals and higher philosophies of the system. Despite this design, the principal in this study was described by participants as supportive by encourage the development of the culture by promoting problem solving, innovation, risk taking, and team building (Coquyt, 2019, p. xi).

Leaders should reflect on their efforts to be simultaneously tight on expectations or non-negotiables, but loose on how those expectations are met; their overt and covert strategies; and the culture of their schools (DuFour et al., 2006; Marion & Gonzales, 2013). As evidenced by the different outcomes in the elementary and high school, the directives were met differently in each group. The most prevalent theme that was stated in the high school was that of relevance and ownership as this was a deeply held belief underpinning the very purpose for the system of teacher leadership. Relevance and ownership were reported in the elementary as well, but under the context that they had already been attained. As previously stated by Deci (2017) and Biddle (1979), the more leaders can attend to the psychological needs of their workers, and create conditions that foster autonomous motivation, the more productive the worker, allowing them to solve the shifting daily problems of their jobs.

This is not to say that leaders should entirely step back from decision making, abandon an initiative if met with resistance, or avoid conflict, or wait for 100% buy-in. Leaders have an obligation to ensure professionalism by promoting the most current and proven strategies in place of less effective practices and use their authority when necessary (DuFour, n.d.). However, reasons for resistance (or success) should be investigated including the system itself. A practical implication of this study is the importance of shared decision making and visioning using dialogue and shared leadership, as opposed to debate and mandate (Fullan, 2016, 2018; Knight,
In this model, stakeholders are involved in continual dialogue and jointly examine a problem, find solutions, plan for implementation and criteria for success, and monitor and adjust as needed (National Implementation Research network, n. d.). This study did not examine how the district initiatives were decided upon, but did examine how the system of teacher leadership, upon which those initiatives were placed functioned, and found shared ownership and relevance to be a key issue.

Coherence is not a place of arrival, but a continual process impacted by systemic learning, shifting needs, and entrance or exodus of professionals (Biddle, 1979; Fullan, 2016; Senge, 2006). Continual training for principals, teacher leaders, and staff is necessary to maintain growth. Leaders cannot assume that teacher leaders and teachers know how to work with each other; understand, plan for, and assess change; or deal with conflict (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, Cooper et al., 2016, p. 89; Dozier, 2007). Principals, teacher leaders, and teachers should continually be engaged in training and dialogue regarding these topics. It was evident in this study that only the teacher leaders were receiving training regarding the aforementioned topics. Similarly, those that were not involved in the initial planning of the system of teacher leadership had to derive the purpose of the system and function of the roles within it from their experiences. While teachers may not be in formal leadership positions, understanding the formal positions in order to engage with them more effectively includes an awareness of the theories and models teacher leaders are learning to create transparency of purpose. The depth of learning between teacher leaders directly engaged in the training and teachers receiving a summary may differ, however coherence and trust may be increased as transparency of expectations and the functions of the roles is shared and more people gain knowledge of the system, its goals, and measures taken to achieve those goals.
Additionally, principals may need to engage in training to develop their own skills to cultivate leaders (Sterrett & Irizarry, 2015). Utilizing frameworks such as the Teacher Leader Model Standards may help create common language, vision, and discussion points as all three groups (administration, teacher leaders, and teachers) reflect upon their system of teacher leadership (Coquyt, 2019; Coquyt & Creasman, 2017). Furthermore, referring to shared expectations, trainings, and a common framework may help teacher leaders advocate for their own positions and maintain relationships (Reay et al., 2006; Struyve et al., 2014).

The practical implications derived from this study may benefit not only educational leaders, but community and organizational leaders as well. Implications included leaders taking a multi theoretical approach to examining the coherence of a system with role theory as a starting point; continual stakeholder engagement in dialogue concerning creating and maintaining shared visions and problem solving; examining how leadership strategies impact psychological underpinnings including the need for autonomy, localized decision making, transparency, relevance, ownership, and a collaborative culture; the need for differentiated professional development and networking; and continual training of all participants using a common framework.

This study can be used as a framework for analyzing the coherence of a system of teacher leadership including creating a systematic plan of investigation and promoting dialogue with all members to examine the system as a whole. While conflict was not widespread in the school in this study as a whole, instances where conflict was present can be examined in a similar fashion as this study.
Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research concerning the coherence of systems of teacher leadership were derived from the data and from the design of the research study. First, Biddle (1979) stated that members within the same group may be unaware of shared or differing expectations. When investigating the perspectives of each group of participants, it may be beneficial to ask participants to speculate what other groups might say the reasons for teacher leadership may be. A protocol of this sort may air assumptions, misconceptions, and faulty attempts at mind reading, leading to a deeper understanding of the coherence of the system.

This study used the researcher and interviews as the main instruments for collecting data. Other methods of data collection may be used in future studies such as participant journals or observations. Participants could be asked to keep journals to reflect upon their PLC meetings and peer coaching meetings, summarize those encounters, record anything they did or did not implement in their instruction, and reflect upon why it was or was not implemented. This could take considerable commitment on the part of the participants but would provide reflection data closer to the actual events and enhance the connection between engagement with teacher leaders and changes in practice. On-site visits to attend PLC meetings, observe peer coaching meetings, or trainings may add another dimension of triangulation to the study. Furthermore in-person observations allow a research to record such dimensions as body language, tone of voice, topics of discussion, and participation patterns that may add to the evidence of culture and engagement (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Depending on the context and size of the school, future studies may include more participants in order to investigate the depth and breadth of coherence. The rural school in this study was small and reports of the teacher leadership situation in both the elementary and high
school aligned between participants. A point of saturation was quickly reached. Similarly, a cross-case study may be conducted in which the coherence of similar formal teacher leadership systems from more than one school may be compared across multiple dimensions.

**Conclusion**

The conclusion will begin with a summary of the study, definitive answers to the research questions, and a reflection and concluding thoughts of the researcher.

**Summary**

Systems of teacher leadership have developed to address several needs including demands for increased student achievement, job embedded and continual teacher professional development, and the increased demands placed on administrators to meet these needs. Teacher leadership models vary according to their functions, roles, contexts, and surrounding cultures subsequently producing different results. This study included only a school utilizing a system of formal teacher leadership to narrow these variables. The literature review investigated prior research including the primary theory of role theory; the function and impact of principals upon a system of teacher leadership; perspectives of teacher leaders and their functions, perceived barriers, and behaviors in their roles; and perspectives of teachers regarding their peers in leadership positions, engagement with teacher leaders, and impacts of the system of teacher leadership.

This qualitative case study used role theory to investigate the alignment of perceived functions of the formal system of teacher leadership, role expectations, how those roles manifested, and how the system functioned through the perspectives of the principal, teacher leaders, and teachers in a small rural school. Perspectives were captured using individual semi-
structured interviews which were analyzed to construct a reality of the specific school, discern the coherence of the system, and find themes through inductive and deductive reasoning.

The findings were separated according to elementary and high school settings. The elementary findings suggested that coherence manifested in the elementary through shared visions or philosophies of teacher leadership, shared and fulfilled role expectations, and a supportive culture. In addition, teachers felt ownership and relevance of professional development activities and felt supported to implement changes into their classrooms. The high school findings suggested that both instances of coherence and discord manifested. Teachers emphasized unity and ownership in their visions of teacher leadership in addition to the shared vision of collaboration for increased professional development and student outcomes. High school participants described the role of the PLC facilitator as a dichotomy between a leadership and non-leadership position, which led to role confusion. This further led to issues of teacher and teacher leader engagement when it came to combining district initiatives and those discerned by the teachers. Furthermore, not all teachers held the same philosophy for the role of the peer coach. These times of discord caused some teachers to disengage from teacher leaders. Coherence manifested when teachers described times of ownership, relevance, collaboration, and support. Teachers stated changes that were based on student needs and interactions with peers and teacher leaders. When disengagement from teacher leaders was apparent, teachers still implemented changes based on student needs.

Conclusions can be drawn that when personal and institutional philosophies align and behaviors align with role expectations throughout the system, teachers engage with colleagues in a collaborative and positive manner, resulting in a positive culture and an increased receptivity to and ownership of changes in their practice. When nuances in the philosophy of a system of
teacher leadership exist for one party, these nuances can manifest further in role expectations, engagement between different roles, culture, and the outcomes of the system. Instructional decisions teachers make may stem from collaboration among peers and teacher leaders, however when peer, teacher-leader, and teacher engagement was low, ownership and relevance seemed to be low as well. Despite the discord, teachers may still engage in deliberation and change practice of their own accord.

**Research Questions**

This study focused upon three research questions designed to investigate the coherence of a system of teacher leadership upon teachers’ engagement with teacher leaders and instructional practices. The findings from this study answered the research questions and provided two different scenarios to illustrate the importance of coherence within a system.

The first research question was: How do the rationales of teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators regarding teacher leadership in their school align? Regarding the elementary findings of this study, rationales of teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators regarding teacher leadership in their school aligned and produced a common purpose of teacher collaboration aimed to increase teacher development and student outcomes. Elementary participants were able to describe the functions of the roles of teacher leaders consistently; agreed teacher leaders functioned as teachers, not administrators; and further confirmed teacher leaders were acting in accordance with their personal and organizational role expectations. Teachers felt shared ownership in the direction of the PLCs, valued genuine feedback from peer coaches, and found relevance in professional development activities.

Overall, the high school findings suggested that the rationales of teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators aligned regarding the purpose of the system of teacher leadership: to
foster teacher collaboration and professional development that addresses student needs. However, a major finding was the teachers’ and teacher leaders’ addition and emphasis of teacher ownership to this rationale. This nuance resonated in each high school participant’s interview in varying degrees. High school participants described conflicting statements of feeling ownership in the PLC’s as they contributed to the agenda, yet they did not feel ownership when district directives were perceived as irrelevant, narrow, or did not promote collaboration among all members of the group. Even though the participants could explain how the teacher leadership roles functioned in their school, not all participants agreed with that function. Furthermore, not all high school participants viewed teacher leaders as being on the same level as teachers, rather a hierarchy or some semblance of administration was noted.

The second research question was: How does the coherence of a system of leadership impact classroom teachers’ abilities to engage with formal teacher leaders? Elementary teachers described how they engaged with teacher leaders regularly, openly, and in mutually supportive ways. This finding was reciprocated as teacher leaders described receptivity, trust, and collaboration when working with teachers. Teachers perceived teacher leaders as acting in accordance with shared expectations and the teachers’ personal visions of teacher leadership. It would seem as coherence and a positive culture was reached, teacher-teacher leader engagement increased. Conversely, high school participants who had differing visions of teacher leadership roles, or did not feel the teacher leader was fulfilling the function of the role according to the teacher’s philosophy, described times of disengagement from those teacher leaders, and a reluctance to implement suggestions. High school teachers had differing perspectives, values, and philosophies of the teacher leaders.
The third research question was: How does the coherence of a system of teacher leadership impact classroom teachers’ abilities to implement instructional changes? The results of the two scenarios differed slightly. According to the results of the elementary, it seemed as though the system was coherent as little role conflict was described, and a positive culture was present in which teachers felt comfortable to reflect together and support each other. Teachers described changes they made and related them to working with peers in a PLC, to the peer coach, and to student needs.

According to the results in the high school, engagement with teacher leaders was overall positive, however, when feedback or tasks were perceived as irrelevant, not mutually contrived, or ulterior motives were detected, teachers were reluctant to engage in the instructional changes being asked of them, rather teachers changed instruction on their own according to the needs of their students.

If teachers are the most impactful factor on student outcomes (Lumpkin et al., 2014; McKenzie & Locke, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2000), then it stands to reason that teachers must be equipped with the best strategies to meet the needs of the students. Research suggests that teachers learn best in networks in which they can engage in sensemaking with peers to collaboratively reflect upon, plan, demonstrate, and discuss effective pedagogy, data practices, and teaching and learning (Louis et al., 2013; Margolis & Doring, 2012; Shillingstad et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2016; Spillane, 1999). If a district implements a formalized system of teacher leadership to provide this structure, then coherence, beginning with shared philosophies, expectations, and values must be continually sought as formal systems may disrupt the status quo of the institution. The findings of this study suggested issues such as lines of power and control, ownership, egalitarianism, in- and out-grouping, and relevance are among the symptoms related
to issues of coherence. However, as a teacher leadership system approaches coherence, participants may begin to feel relevance, ownership, support, and seem less resistant to change. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) would agree with Senge’s (2006, p. 143) thought, “It’s not what the vision is, it’s what the vision does.” Members of the system should use dialogue to inquire into their own philosophies, beliefs, and values and inquire into those of others in light of the shared goal. The results of this study and the structure of the study itself may provide a framework for stakeholders hold such an examination as they work toward coherence.

**Researcher’s Reflection**

Empirical studies such as this require the researcher to fully divulge positionality, axiology, biases, professional skills, and assumptions, and conflicts of interest that may influence the conceptualization, execution, analysis, and interpretation of the results. Further details included the researcher’s interest in and connection to the problem, casting the researcher’s voice and presence into the study. As such, the researcher’s concluding thoughts upon lessons learned as a scholar-researcher and impact on professional growth are provided.

As a scholar-researcher, interview skills were improved regarding the ability to formulate follow up questions. Even though the original questions were purposeful and garnered a wealth of information, more questions emerged as interviews were conducted, and gained in specificity regarding answering the research questions. In addition, choosing the lens of role theory was approached with great deliberation, as many other theories were just as relevant but narrow. Role theory allowed for the simultaneous examination of a wide range of factors concerning macro and micro levels of the system. Other theories added clarity to the nuances of both the psychological and social aspects of teacher leadership and the study of human and organizational behavior. In the search for theory, theory was learned.
As a practitioner reflecting on lived experiences, comparisons were drawn of what was
experienced as a Coordinator including instances of conflict, relevance, ownership, and instances
of coherence. Looking through the lens of role theory helped explain why some of these
variations may have existed in both the research setting for this study and the experienced
setting.

The literature review provided a history of the development of teacher leadership and the
development of the research concerning teacher leadership. Perhaps more importantly, themes,
barriers, successes, and contextual, empirical evidence of leadership systems manifested in not
only the field of educational leadership, but organizational and community leadership as well.
The literature review coupled with the results of this study emphasized the role of leaders to
embrace shared visioning and decision making, engage in constant dialogue, and provide
opportunities for experiential learning.

Research has shifted from whether or not systems of leadership should be implemented,
to their design and implementation, problem solving complex psycho-social systems, and how to
maximize systemic coherence and effectiveness. Systems of teacher leadership hold the potential
to impact student achievement on a broad scale (Barnett, 2019). However, teacher leadership
systems are complex, dependent on context, and take to develop, and require skilled leaders to
work toward coherence. Studies such as this must continue in order to intentionally examine
these adult behaviors and skills, and the system itself, before meaningful child outcomes will be
realized (Kauerz & Coffman, 2013).
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Appendix A

Interview Questions (Semi-Structured)

Interview Questions for the Principal

1. Tell me about your professional background. (i.e., Years as an administrator, years as a teacher; subject(s); how many school districts)

2. On a large scale, what is your rationale behind teacher leadership in your school? (Follow up or prompts: Why did teacher leadership start in your school? What are the goals or purposes of teacher leadership in your school?)

3. What are the different formal roles in your teacher leadership system?

4. What is the purpose of each of those roles?

Interview Questions for Teacher Leaders

1. Tell me about your professional background.
   (i.e. Years as a teacher; subject(s); leadership positions; how many school districts taught in)

2. On a large scale, what is your rationale behind teacher leadership in your school?
   (Follow up or prompts: Why did teacher leadership start in your school? What are the goals or purposes of teacher leadership in your school?)

3. What are the different formal roles in your teacher leadership system?

4. What is the purpose of each of those roles?

5. What teacher leadership role(s) are you in?

**Follow-up Essential Question:** What is the purpose of teacher leaders themselves (PLC Facilitators, Peer Coaches, Mentors)?
1. How would you associate or categorize yourself as a teacher leader – as more administrator-like, teacher-like, or some combination? In other words, what is your status as a teacher leader?

2. In your school, what do you see as the purpose of teacher leaders? (i.e.: to implement district/administrative ideas, foster collaboration, something else, or a combination of things?)

3. Does what you categorized yourself as jive with what you think your purpose as a teacher leader should be? If there is a difference between your experience and your ideal, could you explain that?

4. Does how you’re perceived by other teachers impact their ability to work with you (communicate, implement advice)? i.e.: Has there been any issues with your status as a teacher leader and other’s willingness to work with you now or in the past?

**Interview Questions for Teachers**

1. Tell me about your professional background.
   (i.e. Years as a teacher; subject(s); how many school districts taught in, etc.)

2. Have you been a teacher leader?

3. On a large scale, what is your rationale behind teacher leadership in your school?

4. What are the different formal roles in your teacher leadership system?

5. What is the purpose of each of those roles?

6. Describe your interactions with teacher leaders. (What do you do together?)

7. Describe any instructional changes you’ve made lately (think about planning, delivery, assessment, or classroom management).

8. Who or what influences your instructional decisions or changes?
9. Of those you mentioned, could you prioritize them by most influential?

**Follow-up Essential Question:** What is the purpose of teacher leaders themselves (PLC Facilitators, Peer Coaches, Mentors)?

1. In your school, do you see teacher leaders as more administrator-like, teacher-like, a combination, or something else?

2. In your school currently, what do you see is the purpose of teacher leaders? (i.e.: to drive or implement district/administrative ideas, to foster collaboration among teachers, something else, or a combination of things?)

3. Does what you see teacher leaders as in your school jive with what you think their purpose should be? If there is a difference between your experience at your school and your ideal, could you explain that?

4. How does your view of teacher leaders you described in Questions 1 and 2 affect your ability to work with them (communicate, implement advice)?

- If you are (were) a teacher leader, does how your colleagues view you affect their ability to work with you?
Appendix B

Elementary Open Codes, Criteria, and Participant Responses

The table is organized not in numerical order of codes but is grouped by codes that were used to create larger themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code(#)</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Sample Participant Responses</th>
<th>Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust (8)</td>
<td>Demonstrates risk taking, confidence in other’s ability, comfort level, and confidentiality</td>
<td>• I really like to like go out on a limb when she’s going to be observing me</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• I feel that people are comfortable working with me</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• So, I, I don’t always want to be safe when I’m doing my observations, I want to try things and then get that feedback</td>
<td>K. Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• And you don’t want them to always see the good things either</td>
<td>K. Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• I am not there to judge others</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• She knows exactly what needs to be done</td>
<td>2nd Grade Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• I remember…having somebody come into my classroom that’s one of my peers and trying to evaluate me is kinda scary</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness (9)</td>
<td>Mentions lone, only, or new</td>
<td>• It doesn’t make you feel so alone</td>
<td>K. Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• I don’t feel like the new kid on the block</td>
<td>2nd Gr. Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration (10)</td>
<td>Includes: together, all, ‘collaboration’</td>
<td>• It's all of us working together to drive what it is we're after</td>
<td>K. Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• We work together, we just bump into each other in the hall</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• We come together to plan</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• What's nice is that we can help each other</td>
<td>2nd Gr. Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• We're all experiencing and we're all figuring this out together.</td>
<td>2nd Gr. Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Idea that teachers really needed to be working together</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team (3)</td>
<td>Must include ‘team’</td>
<td>• I get team input of what they want to do</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• I really try to make it be a team drive as far as what people’s concerns are, and where we see needs, and then we try and find things that address those needs.</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• We are a team and we all bring valuable tools and information to the table to share.</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• I think we work well as a team</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• This idea that teacher really need to be working together in teams.</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy (15)</td>
<td>Self-Efficacy, Collective Efficacy, achievement</td>
<td>• ‘Cause it’s so daunting right away and you, you...understand that the weight of the world doesn’t have to be on your shoulders</td>
<td>K. Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It's all of us working together to drive what it is we're after</td>
<td>K. Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It makes me feel like, yes, I can still do this job.</td>
<td>2nd Gr. Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• And then your just like well, everybody else is feeling the same way, just plunge into it and see what happens. And you know now you're not so scared anymore.</td>
<td>2nd Gr. Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It creates such a good support system, and if we're able to work together on that and how to improve, because we really want to see each other as being successful.</td>
<td>2nd Gr. Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We're not in this career you sink or swim kind of thing, we all want to swim together</td>
<td>2nd Gr. Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They want to do better, they want to learn from what I have to offer after an observation</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People feel really empowered despite the road blocks</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture (6)</td>
<td>Thoughts and feelings toward whole staff</td>
<td>• We’re just a little family</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We’re just a close little school</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It’s not super formal [describing communication between teacher leaders]</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It’s very natural [the system in place]</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I’m very lucky there hasn’t been a whole lot of conflict</td>
<td>K. Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We have such a great group of teachers</td>
<td>K. Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We can pretty much talk with her anytime</td>
<td>K. Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It’s just nice to have people that are willing to hear all sides and work together</td>
<td>K. Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We have a really good group of teachers here</td>
<td>K. Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I haven't heard of anyone complaining about being observed. I think that has just become a norm in our culture and people are really open to the feedback.</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People are very open to coaching and feedback in general and that goes with the culture of the school and how that has developed through this whole process... I think that has just become a norm in our culture and people are really open to the feedback.</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There have been many days I've doubted why I did this, but to have me in a system that is so so helpful, so supportive, and they basically have taken me under their wing just to help me through this process, uhm... it's been a really great, great start for me</td>
<td>2nd Gr. Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindset (16)</td>
<td>• We want all teachers to be successful</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Shared Vision of Teacher Leadership

| Beliefs, ‘mindset’ | • Nobody’s a bad teacher | Peer Coach |
| • We’ve always had really positive facilitators to lead the PLC meeting and so I think that helps too because there's a good mind frame for it - mindset for it. | Peer Coach |
| • We really want to see each other as being successful | 2nd Gr. Teacher |

| Respect (7) | • I have a ton of respect for her [peer coach]. Ton of respect for her opinion. | Facilitator |
| • She knows exactly what is needed to be done and that is a very big opportunity she does for us. | 2nd Gr. Teacher |

| Continual Improvement (11) | Change, growth | • [Described PLC going from reactive to proactive] | Facilitator |
| • And that’s the role of being a teacher, how can you improve | 2nd Gr. Teacher |

| Productive (13) | ‘productive’, accomplish | • It’s actually structured environment where we can get things done and be able to have that time be productive. | K. Teacher |
| • It’s not a waste of time, it’s productive | K. Teacher |
| • We are benefitting greatly from our PLC meetings | Peer Coach |
| • It's good, sometimes I think the topic may be, is not really invigorating, so sometimes we… it's kinda stagnant | Peer Coach |
| • I really like when we're doing PLC's to start planning because it really feels like we’re giving kids what they need during those times. | Peer Coach |
| • Some years PLC’s accomplish a whole lot, and some years they just can't seem to get off the ground | Principal |

| Relevant (4) | Discussions/ Tasks that helped in classroom/ teaching | • [Named timely discussions/projects: Reading incentive, child study, making spreadsheets, student focus groups by skills] | K. Teacher |
| • I get a lot of good feedback | K. Teacher |
| • I get good feedback | Facilitator |

<p>| Focus (1) | ‘focus’, direction | • We started out as... not as focused I don’t think, but now we’re more focused, and it’s just focused on how do we improve things at our school. | Facilitator |
| • An assignment almost, this week we're going to work on it, and come back and talk about it next week | Peer Coach |
| • I liked having a purpose and sometimes I feel like we don’t have a purpose anymore | Peer Coach |
| • Really addresses student learning | Principal |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Goal (2)</th>
<th>Goal, purpose</th>
<th>2nd Gr. Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I think we all have the same goals in mind which makes it so much easier</td>
<td>K. Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• For the better of the kids</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• My purpose is to facilitate this sharing and working together for the common good of our school</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• We’re basically on one path</td>
<td>2nd Gr. Teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buy-in (5)</th>
<th>Willingness, resistance</th>
<th>2nd Gr. Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Everyone seems to be receptive to that</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• So it’s not just someone dictating things that might be meaningless to us, it’s just us as a group working together to figure that out</td>
<td>K. Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• We have a really willing staff</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Our staff here has changed, there’s nobody that resists it at all right now</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It’s really difficult to get everyone to buy in sometimes</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

High School Open Codes, Criteria, and Participant Responses

The table is organized not in numerical order of codes but is grouped by codes that were used to create larger themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code (#)</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Sample Participant Responses</th>
<th>Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration (4)</td>
<td>Together, unity, collaboration,</td>
<td>• It’s really nice having the other teachers to work with so that way we can figure that out, what’s working and what’s not working and be successful</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• We do a lot of collaborative stuff together</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• We’re all working together</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• We find a way to tackle it</td>
<td>Math Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• More group interactions</td>
<td>Math Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Rearranging schedules to make it work</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Idea that teachers really needed to be working together</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• We don’t want to separate because we want to stay that united front.</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• We’re very fortunate to have us all together as a team</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• We have the ability to all be together and we feel we’re a really strong team.</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• This idea that teacher really need to be working together in teams.</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture (12)</td>
<td>Culture, buy-in, attitudes and feelings toward the teachers</td>
<td>• And very supportive teachers</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Level playing field</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• We have a great team, but it’s not perfect, but we have each other’s backs</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Focusing on not judging</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• People still try to get on board with trying to improve things</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• You could just feel the morale across the school kind of picking up</td>
<td>Social Studies Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• I haven't heard of anyone complaining about being observed. I think that has just become a norm in our culture and people are really open to the feedback.</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• People are very open to coaching and feedback in general and that goes with the culture of the school and how that has developed through this whole process… I think that has just become a norm in our culture and people are really open to the feedback.</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• We all want to feel like we do a good job</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling of improvement, collective or self</td>
<td>• Everybody is imperfect and everyone seeks to improve</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership (5) Ownership, buy-in,</td>
<td>• People feel really empowered despite the roadblocks</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• When teachers get the ability to lead, like what's on the agenda, I feel like we've put out some really good things through Q Comp, and it's when you know we get bogged down with some of the state mandates, or district mandates or whatever, when we have a voice in helping shape some of those mandates, we have ownership of it, or a stake in the game, like we can live with that, we can work through that. But when it's kind of forced down the pike — ‘This is what you're going to do’—, it's just, it's absent, it honestly drains any value.</td>
<td>Social Studies Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If teachers were able to set the agenda without any influence from administrators, or very limited influence from it, there would be a lot more productive work that gets done.</td>
<td>Social Studies Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I think that's where it gets fun, is like when you're given the freedom to like.. How can I do this and I hope we do that this year</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I guess there's not a lot of buy-in for whatever we put down for the state (goals) because a lot of it is outside your control</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• You need to figure it out</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It’s really difficult to get everyone to buy in sometimes</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control (9)</td>
<td>• There's tension of different people want to drive the changes</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Plc is ours as a team to run</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direction (10)</td>
<td>• And you wanna be careful of how much you're forcing it in too</td>
<td>Social Studies Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Admin wants to start coming in the PLC and be a part of change and stuff, but that time is really teacher time.</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• They have this idea of what they want to have happen and certain language, they don't know exactly what you're supposed to do, but there's a lot of, well you're not supposed to be doing that. F</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships (11)</td>
<td>• If I don't have a great relationship with that person, sometimes I don't understand, and then I check out.</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• We know each other</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• There has been a change and connection with people</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect (14)</td>
<td>• We're respectful</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Taking (13)</td>
<td>• Our peer coaches are highly respected teachers</td>
<td>Social Studies Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust (14)</td>
<td>• Take some risks in the classroom</td>
<td>Social Studies Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• They’re not out trying to get us, they’re trying to do their honest assessment of what we’re doing.</td>
<td>Social Studies Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• There’s got to be trust you know what I mean</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The comfortableness since when I started the district to like what we have now is tremendous</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I remember…having somebody come into my classroom that’s one of my peers and trying to evaluate me is kinda scary</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication (15)</td>
<td>• Oh my goodness, we don't understand each other.</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• We don't talk the same language</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance (7)</td>
<td>• There's a lot of communication that's expressed more from a thoughts and feelings standpoint and not through data.</td>
<td>Math Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• We've been trained to dissect standards for a month and it was honestly the worst hour of the week</td>
<td>Social Studies Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It added a little bit of buzz to the end of your Wednesday when you're working on stuff that as a staff you really know is the right thing to be working on.</td>
<td>Social Studies Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The statistics they try to have us focus on are irrelevant because of the randomness, we're so small.</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A lot of the tasks that are set before us, especially in the PLC end is just busy work of like you know, here's something that we want you to accomplish as administration</td>
<td>Math Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I haven't seen or heard a lot of value added stuff that really provides or helps a lot with direction.</td>
<td>Math Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In Teaching you get all excited about doing something, but it's like yeah but that doesn't fit into the Q Comp model because it's gotta focus on English.</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus (8)</td>
<td>• Really addresses student learning</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The goal in PLC's … ha is probably a little less clearly defined.</td>
<td>Math Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It seems like that direction changes every year or every two years, so there's not a lot of time to see that through.</td>
<td>Math Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• There's lack of clarity</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Wish we spent a lot more time analyzing curricula instead of making it</td>
<td>Peer Coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity (1)</td>
<td>Accomplishment</td>
<td>Purpose (6)</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It’s a benefit to the kids</td>
<td>• Occasionally you see some proof or benefit out of it but it seems like there’s a lot of circle spinning and it takes a long time to get somewhere.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• And if that’s where we have the largest impact</td>
<td>• There’s not a lot of discussion in terms of the benefit of doing something else, or something that’s more needed in our school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• We’re like let's get it done, let's go after it</td>
<td>• How do you find that common purpose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I can see this working</td>
<td>• Feels like a waste of time for a bunch of teachers to make up math questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• It always comes back to student engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Mentor | Social Studies Teacher | Peer Coach | Math Teacher | Peer Coach | Social Studies Teacher |

Note: The responses used from the Principal are the same in the elementary and high school tables. “Peer Coach” is the same former Peer Coach in the high school.