

THE TRANSITION FROM CLASSROOM TEACHER TO INSTRUCTIONAL COACH:  
A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Karin Elizabeth Graham

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of 13 teachers who have transitioned from the role of classroom teacher to instructional coach. All participants were actively involved in at least one of two online instructional coaching forums. At this stage in the research, the teacher to instructional coach transition experience can be described as the decisions and circumstances that led a classroom teacher to pursue the role of instructional coach. The instructional coach can be defined as a collaborative teaching partner that helps build teacher capacity and provides teachers individualized professional development to meet their learning. Using Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory to examine the teacher decision-making process and the transition to instructional coach and Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory to examine self-efficacy and its relation to transitions, the study sought to answer the central research question: What are the experiences of teachers who transitioned from the role of classroom teacher to instructional coach? Interviews, online focus groups, and hypothetical letters from participants to teachers considering transitioning from a classroom teacher, explained their experience with the transition. I analyzed the data to determine emerging themes that explored teachers' decisions to transition from the classroom to the role of instructional coach. Themes from the research that emerged as the essence of the phenomenon are presented as: (a) need for change; (b) call to support teachers; (c) transition is difficult but rewarding; (d) relationships matter. Using participant's shared experiences the study revealed the transition, although difficult at first, yielded personal and professional rewards for each participant.

*Keywords:* classroom teacher, instructional coach, professional development, teacher expectations, teacher transitions.

## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family. I cannot tell you the countless hours I spent in front of the computer trying to balance being a mother, wife, and educator, and still remain supported by those who matter the most to me.

Brent, your strength, love, and understanding keeps me grounded. Thank you for always making sacrifices that show just how much you love and care for your country, but most importantly (to me) our family. I appreciate you more than you will ever know and this doctoral journey has been a long one, one that you have consistently encouraged, supported, and dealt with in a compassionate, loving manner. It was not fate that brought us together with a letter, it was God. I thank him everyday for you. Semper Fidelis.

Ema and Conrad, I pray that you know just how much I appreciate your love and understanding these past five years. I will no longer be sitting in front of the computer, typing away! I hope that you will see the journey I had working towards a doctorate as a lesson in perseverance and hard work. I hope that I have been an example to you that hard work, as long as it takes, pays off. I love you both more than you will ever know.

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Mom, Dad, Grammy, Harry, and Barbara, thank you for always encouraging me and loving me for who I am. Mom and Dad, thank you for all that you have done for me throughout life, your wisdom, love, and support are what has shaped me as a person. Grammy, I love you, you have a heart of gold and a strength no one can match up to.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

United States Department of Education (USDOE)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

There is a lack of research describing teacher experiences transitioning from the classroom to pursue a role that allows them the opportunity to provide on-site individualized coaching to their peers, both inside and outside their classroom. Teachers may feel the pressures of federal and state mandates regarding student achievement and school accreditation, leaving some with a desire to transition to different roles within education to continue to impact student achievement and address those mandates. The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of teachers who transition from the classroom to the role of instructional coach.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide comprehensive background of the problem that informs the purpose of the study and shapes the research questions. Chapter One of this study will provide comprehensive historical, social, and theoretical backgrounds of the problem that informs the purpose of the study and shapes the research questions. This chapter will describe my personal connection to the study, in addition to identifying the practical, empirical, and theoretical significance of the study. Additionally, the research questions and definitions pertinent to the study are given and this chapter concludes with a summary.

### **Background**

Since the implementation of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), schools and teachers have been held accountable for student achievement and growth. To affect an increase in student achievement, teachers must increase time to instruct in core subject areas and avoid teaching to the test, seek engaging instructional strategies to impact student learning, make data-driven decisions, and continually work to change

the learning environment (Ambler, 2015; Grissom, Nicholson- Crotty & Harrington, 2014; Kalin, Cepic, & Steh, 2017). Although school leaders may provide teacher professional development, current research indicates that schools often have a lack of professional development opportunities to improve instruction (Avidov-Ungar, 2016; Ignat & Clipa, 2010; Rush & Young, 2011) and that one-day seminars and conferences are ineffective and limited in their ability to provide sustainable instructional practices to impact student achievement and learning (Knight, 2009a; Marsh, Sloan McCombs, & Martorell, 2012; Rivera-McCutchen & Panero, 2013). Policymakers and practitioners have expressed the need for improving educator quality in schools (Bickmore, 2014; Easton, 2015; Learning Forward, 2017) and instructional coaching can assist in addressing that need. The instructional coach is a research-based learning design (Easton, 2015; Knight 2009) that can be utilized to support a systematic change to improve instructional practices and provide on-site, professional development opportunities to meet individual teacher needs (Desimone & Pak, 2016; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Thomas, Bell, Spelman, & Briody, 2015).

In the past decade, as noted by Knight (2009a) and Rivera-McCutchen & Panero (2013), instructional coaches are a growing trend that allow educators the opportunity to use their instructional skills to build teacher capacity and professional growth in an individualized manner. Research suggests that teachers are lifelong learners who need to stay challenged and be encouraged to explore different opportunities in the field of education (Brooks, 2016; Carlyon, 2014; Price & Weatherby, 2017).

According to Ingersoll (2003), although family and personal reasons contribute to teacher turnover, a larger percentage of teacher turnover can be attributed to dissatisfaction or a desire to pursue other jobs (including jobs within education). Teacher attrition and retention could be a

result of job dissatisfaction, but could also include stressors involving student achievement (Grissom et al., 2014; Ingersoll, 2016; NCLB, 2002), lack of support from administration (Ingersoll, 2016; Kapa & Gimbert, 2017), lack of time pressure (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009), lack of student motivation (Shen et al., 2015; Ingersoll, 2016), lack of personal accomplishment (Ingersoll, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; You & Conley, 2014), and teacher burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009). Although some teachers leave the field (You & Conley, 2014), others pursue careers in the educational field beyond the classroom (Barnatt et al., 2017; Olsen & Anderson, 2007; Rinke & Mawhinney, 2017). Many studies have explored why teachers leave the classroom (Farmer, 2017; Ingersoll, 2003, 2016; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005; Mawhinney & Rinke, 2017), yet there are no known studies that specifically explore why teachers transition from the classroom to become instructional coaches. This phenomenological study seeks address the gap in the literature and give a voice to the experiences of teachers who transitioned from the classroom to become an instructional coach.

## **Historical**

Instructional coaching was designed to assist school administration in providing high-quality learning for teachers that will impact student achievement and instructional practices (Heineke & Polnick, 2013). Instructional coaching and the role of the coach began emerging as researchers and developers recognized the importance of providing teachers individualized professional development to improve instructional practices through their “Pathways to Success Program” (Knight, 2004). Instructional coaching began emerging after the inception of NCLB (2002) and continued to flourish with ESSA (2010) to address the individualized needs of teachers through dialogue, reflective questioning, and coach/teacher collaboration (American Institute for Research, 2005). Utilizing an instructional coach allows schools the opportunity to

have site-based professional development that addresses the complexities of mandates and expectations within NCLB (Desimone & Pak, 2016). Student achievement is largely impacted by teacher quality (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Tivnan & Hemphill, 2005). According to research (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015), instructional coaches have been employed in schools as systematic change agents to improve instructional practices through individualized professional development. Instructional coaches have also addressed the need for data-driven research to help teachers interpret data and identify instructional strategies that will positively impact an increase in student achievement (Marsh et al., 2009). Instructional coaches may currently function not only as a systematic change agent (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015), but also as a peer evaluator to build teacher capacity through observation, modeling, and reflection of instructional practices (Woulfin & Rigby, 2015). Instructional coaches can be considered reflective partners for teachers and work to help build teacher capacity to affect student learning and improve instructional practices through individualized, on-site, professional development. Although there is research defining the role of instructional coaches and the purpose they serve to help teachers increase student achievement and improve their instructional practices, there is no known research regarding why a teacher would transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach.

## **Social**

As teachers grapple with identity in education, job satisfaction, and the pressures of state and federal mandated student achievement goals, there is a need to examine why teachers transition roles (Allen, 2018). Although some teachers leave education (You & Conley, 2014), others choose different roles within the field (Bogler & Nir, 2014; Cooley & Shen, 1999; Ingersoll, 2016). Teacher identity (Allen, 2018; Ellis, Skidmore, & Combs, 2017; Rinke & Mawhinney, 2017) directly correlates to how teachers identifies themselves as an educator in

terms of professional knowledge, subject knowledge, and professional practices (Brooks, 2016). As noted by Brooks (2016), “Teachers’ values can operate like a professional compass in that they give teachers a sense of purpose, on the basis of which they can evaluate other influences on their practice” (p. 63) and can contribute to why a teacher may stay in education, rather than leave (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, & Marinell, 2017; Rinke & Mawhinney, 2017). Research indicated that teacher turnover has been a significant problem and that inadequate resources and support contribute to the problem (Ingersoll, 2001). Additionally, research indicated that new teachers struggle with increasing student achievement and classroom management, and often feel isolated (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Richter et al., 2013). Those new teachers who utilized an instructional coach felt supported and student achievement increased (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Richter et al., 2013). Research indicated the one-day seminars that administrators and school divisions may use do not support sustained instructional practices (Rivera-McCutchen & Panero, 2013). Instructional coaches can be utilized to provide professional development that focuses on observation of instructional practices tailored to specific teacher needs (Garcia, Jones, Holland & Mundy, 2013) and positively impact student achievement and instructional practices (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). Although there is extensive research regarding the need for instructional coaches in the classroom (Knight, 2009; Woulfin & Rigby, 2015) and how they can improve instructional practices (Desimone & Pak, 2016; Hartman, 2013) and student achievement (Denton, Swanson, & Mathes, 2007; Marsh, McCombs, & Martorell, 2009), there is a lack of research giving voice to teachers who decide to leave the classroom, specifically to those choosing a role of instructional coach.

### **Theoretical**

Transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011) supports the idea of transitions as teachers

move in and through the role of instructional coach. The idea of transitions can be loosely defined as events that prompt an individual to think about and reflect upon changing their path based on a change in assumptions about themselves and/or the world (Schlossberg, 1981). How teachers describe and interpret the transition and the motivations with the transition will help to examine the experiences of the teachers turned coaches and why they made the decision to transition roles. Carlyon (2014) suggested that administrators should assist teachers to transition roles in education to impact self-efficacy and professional development.

Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory adds to the examination based on the premise that an individual's beliefs about themselves can influence changes and other events in their lives. Through the transition, some teachers may experience emotions ranging from surprise to confusion (Carver, 2016). In addition, teachers who transition to instructional coach may feel they have multiple roles (teacher, mentor, teacher leader) (Chval et al., 2010) causing them to struggle with identity (Bullough, 2005; Birmingham, Pineda, & Greenwalt, 2013) and question their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994; Ignat & Clipa, 2010; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). Examining how self and situation frame the decision-making process (Fouad & Bynner, 2008; Moltusky, 2010) and the experiences of the teacher's decision to change roles can assist in a deeper understanding of why the teacher moved from classroom instructor to instructional coach (Schlossberg, 2011).

Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg (2012) and Schlossberg (1981, 2011) indicated that transitions and individuals may be different, but understanding individuals in transition involves identifying the transition, examining the transitional process, and studying how the individual adapts throughout the transition process (Rudolph, Lavigne & Zacher, 2016). There is a lack of research describing the phenomenon of transition between classroom teachers to

instructional coach. This study seeks to explore the experiences of classroom teachers who transition to instructional coach.

### **Situation to Self**

My desire to study the phenomenon of teachers who transition from the classroom to the role of instructional coach stemmed from a curiosity to understand what motivates teachers to grow and what helps them grow as educators. As an administrator and former instructional coach, I felt it was important to know what teachers need and want. When I applied to be an instructional coach, I knew it would help me grow as an educator and allow me a break from the pressures and stresses of helping students pass a test to graduate. I wanted to know if others experienced growth and what drove the decision within the phenomenon of transitioning from classroom teacher to instructional coach. I wanted to better understand the experiences of the classroom teacher as they transition from the classroom into the role of instructional coach, what they have experienced as a coach, and what they may take out of their coaching role and into future roles. The study helped provide me insight about the realities of the decision-making process for teachers; I hoped to understand the reasons that teachers make decisions to change roles and to define what changes can be made to retain teachers in the classroom. This study was intended to provide school administrators a greater understanding of why teachers decide to transition from one role to another and what changes can be made to help prevent teacher leavers.

Through this phenomenological study, I approached the study using the ontological assumption that realities are constructed through the lived experiences of individuals (Creswell, 2013) and how multiple realities exist based on those individual experiences (Moustakas, 1994). I approached this phenomenological study using the epistemological assumption that spending

time with participants and examining what they describe about their transition will provide evidence (Creswell, 2013) to inform the study. Although I may have had biases and pre-conceived ideas about the phenomenon, I used the axiological assumption that my values and the values and experiences of the participants are important to the study and its findings. I utilized the rhetorical assumption that I am not seeking the truth, but rather examining the phenomenon through what the participants experienced and shared in a narrative that informs the study (Creswell, 2013). Throughout the research, I brought the paradigm of constructivism to allow participants to construct meaning of their experiences as they transitioned from classroom teacher to instructional coach, what they experienced as an instructional coach, and what they will bring with them as they move out of the role of instructional coach.

### **Problem Statement**

Teacher burnout and the many pressures and stressors related to increasing student achievement to meet federal (NCLB, 2002) and state mandates (Grissom et al., 2014) can affect not only student learning, but also educational processes and instructional practices (Pishghadam, Adamson, Sadafian, & Kan, 2013). Studies indicated that teacher job satisfaction can be impacted by the pressure of increased student achievement (Grissom et al., 2014, Pishghadam et al., 2014) and the school environment (lack of administrative support, time pressures, school climate) (Bogler & Nir, 2015; Malinen & Savolainen, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2014). Other research suggested that teachers who are lifelong learners need to remain challenged (Avidov-Ungar, 2016; Carlyon, 2014; Gravani, 2012) and discover opportunities for personal accomplishment (Sklavvik and Sklavvik, 2017; You & Conley, 2014). Current research falls short because it fails to address that although teachers may leave the educational field entirely (You & Conley, 2014), others transition to

different roles within education (Bogler & Nir, 2014; Ingersoll, 2016). Instructional coaching is a growing trend to assist administrators and school systems to provide individualized professional development (Knight 2009a; Mangin & Dunismore, 2015), to improve instructional practices (Rush & Young, 2011), and to increase student achievement (Rivera-McCutchen & Panero, 2013; Marsh et al., 2009). The problem for this study is to address the absence of the teachers' voices regarding the lived experiences of those teachers who transitioned into an instructional coach role.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of 13 teachers who transitioned from classroom teacher to instructional coach. The instructional coach can be defined as a collaborative teaching partner (Knight 2011; 2016) who helps build teacher capacity (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Carter, 2016) and provides teachers individualized professional development to meet their learning needs (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Carter, 2016). At this stage in the research, the classroom teacher to instructional coach experience is defined as the decisions and circumstances that led a classroom teacher to pursue a role of an instructional coach. The theories guiding this study are Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) transition theory and Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory. Transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011) provides a framework to explore the decision-making process and experiences of teachers transitioning from their role as instructional practitioner in the classroom to a catalyst for professional development of instructional practitioners in their classroom. Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory provides a lens to explore teacher self-efficacy and a teacher's individual experiences and motivations in relation to the transition.

### **Significance of the Study**

Although studies have explored why teachers leave the classroom (Ingersoll, 2001; Mawhinney & Rinke, 2017; Rinke & Mawhinney, 2017) and how job satisfaction (Bogler & Nir, 2014; Kapa & Gimbert, 2017; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010) and burnout (Farmer, 2017; Shen et al., 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017) can contribute to teacher leavers, there is a lack of literature exploring why teachers stay in education and change roles. Instructional coaching is a growing trend that allows educators to use their skills and knowledge of instruction to build teacher capacity and professionalized growth in an individualized manner (Desimone & Pak, 2016; Knight, 2009; Rivera-McCutchen & Panero, 2013). By examining teacher's decisions to leave the classroom, administrators and schools will have a better understanding of teacher needs. The significance of this phenomenological study is to provide an understanding of why teachers transition from the classroom to instructional coach. Using a transcendental phenomenological design will allow me to describe the experiences of individuals who have left the classroom to become an instructional coach, what they experienced as they moved in and through the phenomenon, and what they would share with other teachers considering a transition from classroom to instructional coaching.

### **Practical Significance**

This transcendental phenomenological study will assist administrators to understand why teachers decide to transition from one educational role to another and possibly affect the current decline in attrition/retention of teachers (Ingersoll, 2001, 2016; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012) to create an environment where teachers can thrive (Barnatt et al., 2017). School administrators face the challenge of retaining effective, qualified teachers, and research suggests improving and exploring why teachers leave or stay could impact lower teacher turnover rates, staffing

problems, and aid in school performance (Ingersoll, 2003). Giving a voice to teachers who leave the classroom and transition to a role of instructional coach can assist administrators in retaining teachers, keep them in an educational role, improve instructional practices in the building, and increase student achievement (Desimone & Pak, 2016; Woulfin & Rigby, 2015). More importantly, the experiences of teachers who left the classroom to become instructional coaches could assist in the decision-making process for those teachers who are considering a transition from the classroom to the role of instructional coach.

### **Empirical Significance**

This study will add to the current literature as a practical understanding of why teachers leave the classroom, for there is a lack of understanding as to when and why teachers leave the classroom to pursue other educational roles (You & Conley, 2014). Previous research has focused on teachers who leave the classroom based on student achievement (NCLB, 2002; Grissom et al., 2014), discipline issues (Kapa & Gimbert, 2017), lack of time/time pressures (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010), lack of student motivation (Shen et al., 2015), and lack of personal accomplishment (Sklavvik & Sklavvik, 2017; You & Conley, 2014). This qualitative study will build on the research and provide insight regarding why teachers decide to leave the classroom but remain in education. Stakeholders that will benefit from the study include not only those considering a transition from the classroom to the role of instructional coach, but also administrators who are invested in retaining quality teachers who might be considering changing roles or leaving education.

### **Theoretical Significance**

Using Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) transition theory as a lens to view teacher decisions to change roles, this study seeks to provide an exploration of teacher experiences as they transition

from their role as classroom teacher to instructional coach. Although transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011) includes moving in, moving through, and moving out of transitions, for the purpose of this study, I will be examining the stages of moving in and through the transition of teachers to instructional coach roles. Although some studies focus on teacher transitions to leadership roles (Carver, 2016; Ross et al., 2011; Smith, Hayes, & Lyons, 2017) or between grade levels (Carlyon, 2014), this study seeks to examine the transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach. Adult transitions and the decisions to make a transition include examining self, situation, and how the individual adapts through the transitional process (Anderson et al., 2012; Fouad & Bynner, 2008; Moltusky, 2010; Rudolph et al., 2016; Schlossberg, 2011).

In addition to transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011), Albert Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory can assist in providing a supplementary framework to explore teacher self-efficacy as it encompasses a teacher's individual beliefs, past experiences, and extrinsic motivations, and how these factors can impact the transition. Teacher efficacy can assist in affirming the transition "is the product of a dynamic interplay of personal and situational influences" (Bandura, 1999, p. 155). Additionally, teacher beliefs on self-efficacy relate to the efforts they invest in instructional practices, professional goals, and persistence/resilience when challenges arise (Tshannen-Moran & Carter, 2009). Social cognitive theory and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994) complement the study's theoretical framework because the choices teachers make are most likely determined by the beliefs they hold about themselves and what they experience as they engage in the choices (Bandura, 1993).

Exploring this phenomenon will have theoretical significance for teachers considering transitioning to the role of instructional coach. The extrinsic and intrinsic motivations of a

classroom teacher who has transitioned into the role of instructional coach can provide context to those considering the same transition. This study will provide insight from teachers who have transitioned to coach, what they experienced as an individual, and how it impacted them professionally and personally. Additionally, the study will provide insight from former teachers turned instructional coach and what they feel teachers who may be considering transitioning to instructional coach should know about the experience.

### **Research Questions**

Research questions within the study are designed to explore the experiences of teachers who moved into the role of instructional coach and their perceptions as they moved through the role. A central question and three sub-questions frame the exploration of what teachers experienced and their understandings as they experienced transitions within their changing role.

The central research question is:

What are the experiences of teachers who transitioned from the role of classroom teacher to instructional coach?

In studies by Barnatt et al. (2017), Hong (2012), Ingersoll (2016), Price and Weatherby (2018), and You and Conley (2015), the researchers explored career trajectories of teachers and why some choose to stay in the profession although others leave. Although studies have examined how some teachers may choose to move to administrative (Cooley & Shen, 1999) or leadership (Allen, 2018) roles or move to different schools (Hancock, 2015), there is no unique contribution to the literature regarding why teachers decide to leave the classroom to become an instructional coach. In addition to the central research question, sub questions one through three provide context to the study through exploring teacher turned coach experiences and situations.

1. What key motivational factors influence teachers to transition from the role of classroom teacher to instructional coach?

According to Schlossberg (2011), when examining transitions, it is important to explore the perspective of the individual, in addition to the context of the transition. Making meaning and the individual's internal value system and self-efficacy can affect teacher's decisions to make different career choices (Bandura, 1994; Hong, 2012). Exploring teacher perspectives of prior circumstances and situations they experienced that led them to leave the classroom will assist in an understanding of why they moved into the position of instructional coach.

2. What practical knowledge do teachers acquire about instructional coaching and the role of instructional coach as they fully transition into the role?

As adults transitioned from what they knew in their past role and move towards a new role, they may differ in how they experienced the transition (Schlossberg, 2011). How the teacher turned instructional coach experienced the role change, how it impacted teacher turned coach perspectives of the classroom and culture in a school, and how it affected teacher turned coach sense of self (Bandura, 1994) could help researchers better understand why teachers stay in education and negotiate their roles in schools (Barnatt et al., 2017). Examining the experiences of moving from teacher to instructional coach will help create an understanding of multiple perspectives of what they are taking from the experience and how it relates to the decision to move from the classroom to the role of instructional coach.

3. What valuable advice or information would instructional coaches find significant to share with current classroom teachers who are considering the same transition?

As adults move in, through and out of transitional phases, the transition will ultimately impact their lives (Schlossberg, 2011) and what they believe about their own efficacy and how it

affects their decision (Bandura, 1994). This question seeks to explore how the experiences of a former classroom teacher turned instructional coach will impact those considering a transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach. Using the insights and data gathered from this question will assist me to explore how the experiences could assist in an understanding of why and how teachers pursue their own interests and expand their professional horizons (Olsen & Anderson, 2007).

### **Definitions**

The terms pertinent to the study listed below are grounded in literature related to the topic, theoretical framework, or research design of the study.

1. *Instructional coach* - Instructional coaches are educators, mostly former classroom teachers, who impact instructional practices in the classroom and student learning (Knight, 2016). The instructional coach is also a collaborative partner for teachers who encourages reflective thinking to build teacher capacity and professional growth (Knight, 2016).
2. *Moving in* – Defined as the first stage in the process of moving from one role to another (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011), moving in is the point at which a teacher decides to leave the classroom to become an instructional coach. In this stage, the person becomes familiar with their new role and the expectations of the role (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011)
3. *Moving out* – This stage could signal a need for a change in roles (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 57) or a time to reflect on their transformation from classroom teacher and what they learned as an instructional coach (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011).

4. *Moving through* – The second stage of the process relates to how a person finds balance, support, and challenge in their new role (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011). The experiences within this stage may allow the instructional coach to “know the ropes” (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 57), yet still allow for professional growth.
5. *Self-efficacy* – An individual’s beliefs about their abilities and self and how it impacts decisions and actions (Bandura, 1994; Klassen, 2011).
6. *Transition* – Transitions are non-events or events that bring forth a change in one’s assumptions about themselves and the world and requires a change in behavior and relationships (Schlossberg, 1981).

### **Summary**

This qualitative, transcendental phenomenological study seeks to address the phenomenon of teachers that transition from the classroom to instructional coach and will hopefully provide insight as to why teachers decide to transition from the classroom but remain in education. Although some teachers leave the field entirely (You & Conley, 2014), others transition to different roles within the educational field (Bogler & Nir, 2014; Carlyon, 2014; Ingersoll, 2016). Studies have identified many pressures and stressors contributing to teacher job dissatisfaction/burnout (Farmer, 2017; Ingersoll, 2003, 2016) and the need to consistently improve instructional practices to meet state/federal mandates regarding student achievement (Grissom et al., 2014; NCLB, 2002). Current research notes that teachers seek opportunities for professional growth (Sklavvik & Sklavvik, 2017; You & Conley, 2014) and remain challenged as lifelong learners (Conley, 2015). Instructional coaching allows teachers who have transitioned from the classroom an opportunity to address the needs of their peers by providing on-site, individualized professional development. Although some teachers transition from the

classroom to a role of instructional coach, there is little research giving a voice to the experiences of teachers and why they decided to transition from the classroom to coach.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Overview

Chapter Two will provide an understanding of the Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory, as it will be used as a framework for studying the phenomenon. How adults move in/through transitions, how the experiences impact them, personal influences and how they affect the events and situations in an individual's life, is essential to this study. Transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981) provides a lens to examine the decision-making process, teacher decisions to transition, and what teachers experience through the transition. Literature relevant to the study respects the contributions already made regarding instructional coaching, the development of instructional coaching, and the roles of instructional coaches. This chapter also provides an overview of the literature that provides context to the study exploring the experiences of teachers who leave the classroom to transition to the role of instructional coach.

A review of the literature includes contextual research and studies involving teacher self-efficacy and identity in education, teacher attrition and retention, adult learning, teacher professional development, adult career transitions, and professional transitions in education. There is a lack of literature capturing teacher voices and their own decisions to transition within or out of education (Carlyon, 2014; Carver, 2016; Chval et al., 2010; Mawhinney & Rinke, 2017). Teachers' professional identity and self-efficacy is an underlying factor in professional growth and development (Avidov-Ungar, 2016; Mahmoudi-Gahrouei, Tavakoli, & Hamman, 2016), and contextual factors such as identity and self-efficacy (Brooks, 2016; Flores & Day, 2006; Ignat & Clipa, 2010) can influence teacher transitions in education (Anderson et al., 2012). Few studies have described the influence teachers feel they can have in education (Barnett et al., 2017), more specifically those who transition from the classroom to instructional coach. This

chapter will conclude with a summary of the content and will establish the gap in the literature this study seeks to fill.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This transcendental phenomenological study consisted of research based on the experiences of teachers who transitioned from the classroom to the role of instructional coach. Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory can be linked to the teacher transition from the classroom to instructional coach because it examines "an event or non-event that results in change in assumptions about oneself and world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships" (p. 5). Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory can also be linked to the transition from the classroom to instructional coaching because the decision was most likely impacted by negative and positive experiences (Bandura et al., 2001).

Adult transitions can be examined based on the complexities associated with the transition process and how they could be impacted by a number of factors that include dissatisfaction with current state and a search for identity and meaning in their current role or desire to seek another pathway/role (Plimmer & Schmidt, 2007). Teacher transitions and experiences in role changes in education can be examined using transition model (Anderson et al., 2012; Motulsky, 2010; Plimmer & Schmidt, 2007; Schlossberg, 1981, 2011). The transition model is a framework this study uses to listen to the unique stories of teachers to examine the transition from classroom to instructional coach. Examining the transition will assist in facilitating the development and support for future instructional coaches, and address the gap in literature, because establishing a new professional identity is a process that has not been examined and is often overlooked (Chval et al., 2010; Mahmoudi-Gahrouei et al., 2016). As teachers transition roles in education, their perspectives and understandings of their role and how

they experience the transition could impact their identity and how they identify themselves in education (Chval et al., 2010; Plimmer & Schmidt, 2007). This study will examine the process of transition assuming that “the process of leaving one set of roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions and establishing new ones takes time. For some, the process happens easily and quickly” (Schlossberg, 2011, p. 160). The transitional model examines the types of transition, how the transition may have altered the individual’s life, where the individual is in the process, and how they have used resources in the transition (Anderson et al., 2012; Damle, 2015; Motulsky, 2010; Schlossberg, 1981, 2011). Additionally, social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1994) will assist in examining the transition and how personal, behavioral, and environmental determinants impacted the transition. The processes and strategies an individual uses as they transition are all important to this study because they will allow me to explore different facets of the experiences of teachers who transitioned from the classroom to the role of instructional coach.

### **Transition Theory**

Schlossberg’s (1981) transition model assumes that when one makes a transition, it can be due to an event or nonevent that is result of one’s assumptions of self and/or the world in which they live in. Events in one’s life can be defined as anticipated transitions such as graduation from high school or college, getting married, becoming a parent, starting a first job, changing careers, and retiring (Schlossberg, 2011). Non-events can be defined as events that fail to occur, such as not getting married, not being promoted, and not being able to retire (Schlossberg, 2011). Through the process of transition, the variables can include role changes (gain or loss), effects (positive or negative), sources (internal or external), timing (on time or off time), duration (permanent, temporary, or uncertain), onset (gradual or sudden), and degree of

stress (Schlossberg, 1981). All of these defined variables may not always be a part of the transition process for an individual, but are influential in how one adapts to a transition.

Schlossberg's (1981) transition model delineates that "different factors have different salience depending on the transition and on the subgroup being studied" (p. 16). Using Schlossberg's (1981) transition model as a framework, this study will seek to define variables in the process of transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach.

The onset of a transition may be linked to an event or nonevent and be influenced by variables as defined by Schlossberg (1981), but it is a process that takes place over time that "includes phases of assimilation and continuous appraisal as people move in, through and out of it" (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 59). Anderson et al. (2012) and Schlossberg (1981, 2011) defined the process of transition using three steps: moving in, moving through, and moving out. Moving in is the beginning stage of the transition process and is the point when a person transitions to a new situation (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1981). In this study, moving in is the point at which a classroom teacher moves into the role of instructional coach and includes the experiences that led them to moving in (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1981). Moving in is the process in which an individual establishes new roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions (Anderson et al., 2012). When one transitions into a new role, they learn about and become aware of the role they are moving into, such as the rules, norms, and expectations of that new role. The process of moving in is designed for the individual's understanding of what is expected of them in the new situation or role they assume (Anderson et al., 2012) and will be utilized to explore a teacher's transition from the classroom to instructional coaching.

Moving through (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1981) can be defined as when an adult learner "knows the ropes" (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 57) and establishes their new role.

Within this stage, the individual can question if this was a positive transition and how the transition affected their life. The individual learns to find balance in the new role or situation during the moving through phase and it can be a long process in the transition. In the moving through stage, individuals may question if they made the right choice in the transition of roles or new situation and how that may affect a move out of the transition or situation. This study will explore the experiences of teacher turned coach as they are moving through the role.

Moving out signifies the end of the transition and possible movement into the next transition, whether it be a new role or new start (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1981). As individuals transition out in this process, they may begin to ask themselves what is next or disengage from the relationships and routines of the new role or situation (Anderson et al., 2012). For the purpose of this study, moving out will include what the teacher turned instructional coach will take from the experience as they move into the next transition/role.

Transitioning from one role to another takes time and can be influenced by the four S factors, which can be defined as: situation, self, supports, and strategies (Anderson et al., 2012; Plimmer & Schmidt, 2007; Schlossberg, 2011). Situations a teacher experienced that led to the transition can be examined using multiple facets that include triggers for the transition, the timing of transition in regards to the teacher's need (emotional, social, intellectual), aspects the teacher may or may not be able to control, changes in roles, how long the transition will last, previous experiences with transitions, stressors related to the transition, and individual perceptions of the transition (positive, negative, or neutral) (Anderson et al., 2012; Plimmer & Schmidt, 2007; Schlossberg, 2011). When examining a transition and the process of transition, it is important to note that every situation is different and can be examined using the facets listed above. When an individual transitions, examining the situation includes triggers (external and

internal factors that may have impacted the transition), timing (where in the individual's life did it take place), duration (how long did the transition take), and source of control (how the individual managed the transition) (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1981, 2011). The situation is a factor within the transition process and can connect to the experience of moving in and moving through the process and will be examined through the experiences of a teacher transitioning to instructional coach.

Using self as a factor in the transition requires looking at "what the individual brings to the transition" (Anderson et al., p. 73). Self in the transitional model (Anderson et al., 2012, Plimmer & Schmidt, 2007; Schlossberg, 2011) includes, but is not limited to, their outlook (pessimism, optimism, and self-efficacy) and their values. Focusing on the self when examining individual transitions includes identity (how the person defines who they are in the transitional process), autonomy (the individual's ability to control and make meaning within the transition), past experience (experiences they can bring to the transition and use it as a coping mechanism), self-efficacy (the confidence one brings into the transition) (Anderson et al., 2012; Plimmer & Schmidt, 2007; Schlossberg, 1981, 2011). The way a person thinks about and explains a transition can provide information about what Seligman (2002) refers to as their explanatory style; a person with a positive explanatory style is an optimist, contrarily, a person with a negative explanatory style is a pessimist (Anderson et al., 2012; Plimmer & Schmidt, 2007). An individual's outlook can help me explore how they view the transition from teacher to instructional coach.

Additionally, social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1994) and self-efficacy asserts that when a transition occurs, one's beliefs will help determine how opportunities and obstacles are perceived. Using self as one of the four factors allows me to examine how the teacher

experienced the transition moving in and moving through role changes and how they felt about it. When a teacher moves from classroom to the role of coach they will could experience a shift in identity and self-efficacy because it is a new, unfamiliar role. Validation of this study and self is important because “qualitative research might present a better place to start in that transitions could be viewed holistically, as perceived by individuals experiencing them” (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 226).

The third factor of influence in the transition model can be defined by supports and support systems (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011). Supports throughout the experience are important to hear about from teachers turned instructional coach because there is little knowledge about their learning process and supports associated with instructional coach’s professional growth (Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010). Through the process of transition, supports are critical to one’s well-being/adaptation to the transition (Schlossberg, 2011) and the types of support can vary (family unit, networks of friends, individual’s community). An individual’s experience with transition and supports can include individuals and groups one uses in the transitional process. Resources and training the teacher turned coach receives can impact their experiences as they move in and move through their role and what they may share with others considering a transition from classroom to coaching.

The fourth factor of influence in transitions, strategies, indicates the practices and habits the teacher used to cope with the transition as they moved into and through their new role and how they might use them as they transition to their next role. Coping is the major strategy Schlossberg (2011) identifies in this facet of the process. Using Pearlin and Schooler’s (1978) types of coping in their research, Anderson et al. (2012) and Schlossberg (2011) identify that coping could include changing the situation, reframing the situation, or reducing stress in the

situation. This study will explore the experiences of teachers who transitioned from the classroom to coaching and the facets of how they coped with the transition.

Teachers who transition from the classroom to an instructional coaching role will experience cognitive, emotional, and social development as they move in and through the experience. Through the facets of the four S factors and transition, I can gain a better understanding of change, how it affects individuals, and how it can apply to others considering the same transition. Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory and the four S factors that influence transition (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011) are appropriate lenses to study the experiences of teachers who transition from the classroom to instructional coach because they utilize situation, self, supports, and strategies to examine the experiences of the transition.

### **Social Cognitive Theory**

Social cognitive theory can add to the phenomenon of transitioning to a new role because it asserts that personal and situational influences affect human actions (Bandura, 1999). Social cognitive theory can be defined as how individuals interact in their environment and how they react to situations (Eun, 2018). Through the lens of social cognitive theory, researchers can explore personal influences and how they affect the events and situations in an individual's life (Bandura, 2018). The interplay of personal, behavioral, and environmental determinants help frame the causal model of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986). Factors such as situation, one's knowledge, and skills influence how people will experience transitions and adapt to them. One's own unique intellectual talents and the environment in which they can build upon or share those talents are factors when individuals have to make decisions. Additionally, as a facet of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1994), examining what the classroom teacher turned instructional coach experienced as the teacher moved through the transition using the

observational learning process could provide a secondary lens specific to the journey. The observational learning process includes exploring what the teacher turned coach experienced through attention (observing teaching/learning), retention (reflection), production (identifying plans), and motivation (following through with the plan) (Miller, 2011). Using the observational learning process as a lens, I can explore the experiences of teacher turned coach and how their work with teachers affected their sense of self and the transition. The interactions the instructional coach experiences as they move through the transition when working with teachers, administration, and whole schools and the roles they play within schools is impacted by the observational learning process. Instructional coaches and the role they play include observation, reflection, planning, and implementing plans with teachers, but can also apply to what they experience and how that translates to their own sense of self and the role they play.

Self-efficacy is directly correlated to social cognitive theory, self in the four S factors and the process of transition (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011). One's perception of self contributes to the decisions one makes and can impact how they respond to the decisions. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's perception of self, the individual's ability to adjust to situations, and carry out courses of action in their lives (Klassen, 2011). Self-efficacy directly affects an individual's goals, the types of goals they set for themselves, and their commitment to achieving those goals (Bandura, 2018). A teacher's self-efficacy helps them grapple with decisions they make and includes the persistence and perseverance they employ when faced with difficulties, and the amount of apprehension or tranquility they experience with the decisions they make (Usher & Pajares, 2008).

Through the lens of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1994) and its connection to teacher efficacy and identity, it is important to note that "the abilities of an individual and group are

essential to a building [and the learning/instruction that takes place in that building] and can be connected to social learning theory, more specifically self-efficacy and collective efficacy” (Graham, 2018, p. 25). How one internalizes their capabilities can provide motivation and assist in decisions to transition (Bandura et al., 2001). Decisions are often impacted by consequences associated with both positive and negative experiences (Bandura et al., 2003).

A teacher’s decision to transition to the role of instructional coach can be affected by self-efficacy and identity because both impact the decision through cognitive, motivational, and affective factors (Bandura et al., 2003). Through self-efficacy, teachers are engaged in making decisions that shape their lives and the course of their careers (Bandura, 2018). The interplay of personal determinants (Bandura, 2018) can correlate to Anderson et al. (2012) and Schlossberg’s (2011) Four S model, as the model uses self, situations, and supports as a framework for examining adult transitions. Bandura’s (1994) theory provides an additional lens to the theoretical framework based on his assertion that an individual will make decisions based on their own unique intellectual talents and the environment in which they can build upon or share those talents.

### **Related Literature**

Although there is a lack of research describing teacher experiences transitioning from the classroom to a role that allows them to coach their peers, there is a wealth of literature related to instructional coaching, the roles of an instructional coach, teacher self-efficacy and identity, teacher attrition and retention, adult learning, professional development in schools, adult career transitions, and transitions within education (Cox, 2015; Galluci et al., 2010; Knight, 2009; Rinke & Mawhinney, 2017; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Examining related literature also provided a deeper, richer understanding of things that could influence a teacher’s decision to

change roles. All of the related literature is important to the study because it provides background to the gap in the research and provides context for exploring the experiences classroom teachers who transitioned to a role of instructional coach.

### **Federal Mandates**

In 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) as a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. One of the major facets of the law included ensuring all teachers were highly qualified, which required all teachers in core subject areas to have bachelor's degree, to demonstrate subject-matter knowledge in the area(s) they teach and hold a certificate or license in the subject they instruct (NCLB, 2002). Additionally, the law emphasized that professional learning as a key strategy for improving teachers' skills and effectiveness (ASCD, 2015). State and district leaders are responsible for ensuring professional learning opportunities for teachers will assist in improving teacher content knowledge in the area(s) they teach, will assist teachers to become highly qualified, and will improve teacher understandings of instructional strategies (ASCD, 2015). Most importantly, the act focused on student accountability and school improvement that is data driven and monitored by states and districts.

Based on the mandates established through NCLB and the increasingly complex challenges educators and schools face, there was a need for more personalized learning for teachers. Instructional coaching was impacted by the signing of NCLB because the act required schools and districts to incorporate more personalized professional learning for teachers, like coaching, to assist in impacting instructional strategies and increase school improvement/student achievement. The challenges of school accountability and the need for personalized teacher learning based on mandates within the NCLB forced educational leaders to invest in professional

learning practices that address the diverse levels of educators and influence teachers' ability to change practices (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Instructional coaching has been encouraged as a form of professional development because of NCLB (Hartman, 2013; Marsh et al., 2009; Woulfin & Rigby, 2015).

A decade after NCLB was enacted, "the Obama administration joined a call from educators and families to create a better law that focused on the clear goal of fully preparing all students for success in college and careers" (USDOE, 2017, p. 1). President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law on December 10, 2015. The act reduced the federal role in K-12 education and replaced/updated NCLB. ESSA's mandates supported educators by prioritizing excellence and equity in student learning (USDOE, 2017). Recognizing the role of the teacher in the success of every student, the Federal Government continued to support educational research and the need for quality professional learning for all educators (ESSA, 2015; NCLB 2002).

Replacing and updating NCLB, ESSA included removing the highly qualified teacher requirement (beginning in 2016-2017) and continuing to support the need for evidence based professional learning (ASCD, 2015). The act changed the landscape of professional development by updating the current act with sustainable activities that are intensive, collaborative, transferable to the classroom/job embedded, and data driven (Learning Forward, 2017). Additionally, ESSA dictated that professional learning should meet the needs of educators through personalization and embedded in the educators work day (ASCD, 2015). This act allowed for job embedded professional learning, such as instructional coaching, to continue to support scholarly findings that indicate professional learning should be research based and support teachers to enhance instructional practices and increase student achievement. ESSA is

important to note in the related literature, because it directly impacted professional learning and teacher growth to affect student learning.

### **Instructional Coach**

Instructional coaches were designed as a personalized strategy to develop teacher practices (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012) and to provide onsite professional development for teachers (Aguilar, 2013; Desimone & Pak, 2016; Knight 2016; Mangin & Dunismore, 2015).

Professional development that addresses the needs of teachers facing mandates of the NCLB Act (2001) requires more than the one-day seminars or conferences (Knight, 2009; Marsh et al., 2009; Rivera-McCutchen & Panero, 2013), and instructional coaches were designed to address the demands of student assessment (Denton et al., 2007). Literature from the 1980s and 90s regarding teacher coaching reported an increase in teacher practices with regards to curriculum pacing, classroom management, and meeting instructional objectives (Kohler, Ezell, & Paluselli, 1999).

As teacher demands progressed, so did the need for a different definition of instructional coach. Research in the early 2000s indicated that instructional coaches helped improve school culture and teacher collaboration (Guiney, 2001; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). As time progressed, so did the many facets of instruction, teaching, and professional growth in education. An instructional coach is beneficial to the teacher, just as the coach benefits from experiences with the teacher; there is a mutual benefit for both to grow as professional educators (Desimone & Pak, 2016). Because both the coach and teacher have classroom experiences of their own, the experiences they share with each other allows for a safe learning community (Aguilar, 2013).

The instructional coach not only provides the teacher with instructional support for student achievement, but the coach serves as a reflective partner to build on their current

practices, share ideas, conduct action research, and problem solve (Rhodes & Beneicke, 2002; Suarez, 2018). Ultimately, the instructional coach was designed as a systemic and individualized initiative for reform (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). Jim Knight (2016b), a name commonly associated with instructional coaching and its development, defines instructional coaching as coaches who partner with teachers to “analyze current reality, set goals, identify and explain teaching strategies to hit the goals, and provide support until the goals are met” (para. 1). A review of the literature suggests that the definition of instructional coach is multi-facet and changes with time, location, and teacher needs (Wolpert-Gawron, 2016). A synthesis of the definition of instructional coach provides background about the intent of a coach.

### **Instructional Coaching and Roles of the Coach**

An instructional coach can take on many roles in a school, it is often dependent on the needs of the school (Hartman, 2013; Teemant, Wink, & Tyra, 2015), the administration (Wolpert-Gawron, 2016), or the division (Marsh, McCombs, & Martorelli, 2012). The role of the instructional coach can vary from classroom to classroom and can morph over time. While some teachers may need assistance with classroom management, others may need assistance with curriculum and planning. The instructional coach is often viewed as a highly skilled classroom teacher, with at least five years of classroom experience (Aguilar, 2013). The role an instructional coach may fill is determined by the experiences they have had in the classroom and their ability to help identify teacher needs. Studies have indicated that coaching roles attend to the instructional and collaborative needs of a teacher and include peer mentor, data coach, content expert, reflective partner, and professional learning facilitator (Chavel et al., 2010; Knight, 2009). Additionally, the instructional coach could positively affect a teacher’s identity and self-efficacy utilizing Bandura’s observational process to impact instructional practices

through attention (observing teaching and learning); retention (reflecting/thinking about what is observed); production (identifying/creating a plan); motivation (implementing a new plan/adjusting instruction) (Miller, 2011).

The instructional coach's role in instructional practices is designed to assist teachers with implementing new practices or observing current practices and providing feedback. When an instructional coach serves to assist with instruction, it can be multi-faceted. Not only can the coach observe instruction, they can assist teachers in creating meaningful assessments after observation, provide them feedback, or be a reflective partner (Desimone & Pak, 2016; Knight, 2009). Instructional coaches can utilize their expertise to provide teachers research-based instructional practices that can be modeled (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). Instructional coaches can use their experiences with curriculum to assist in pacing instruction and planning for assessment. Ultimately, the instructional coach can serve many different instructional roles, including: reflective partner (of instructional practices), organizer (lessons, pacing), observer, co-teacher, and analyst (assessment and student learning) (Margolis, Ryoo, & Goode, 2017). The literature provides a clear understanding of why coaches were instituted in schools, but there is not a clear understanding of teacher experiences as they transitioned to coach.

### **Collaborative Roles of the Instructional Coach**

Although the coach exists as expert, the coach role as collaborative partner should be identified as a partner by the teacher, not an evaluator (Rhodes & Beneicke, 2002). Creating a collaborative environment for teachers to share their thoughts and ideas requires the coach to establish trust with their assigned teachers (Huston & Weaver, 2007; Knight, 2016). Through the role of collaborative partner, there must be mutual respect, trust, and an understanding of confidentiality by both the coach and the teacher (Huston & Weaver, 2007). Research has

indicated that collaboration between teacher and instructional coach and the discourse they engage in through collaboration not only leads to increases in content knowledge, pedagogy, and positive student outcomes (Aguilar, 2013; 2014; Henieke & Polnick, 2013; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015), but also an opportunity for individualized collaboration and mentorship to affect those increases (Desimone & Pak, 2016; Knight, 2016). The collaborative essence of the instructional coach indicates that a coach should remain a collaborative partner, establishing themselves as equals with teachers they work with both inside and outside the classroom (Knight, 2009). Additionally, studies indicated that instructional coaches must remain aware of their role in the collaborative partnership and adjust their approaches when they collaborate, based on the needs of each individual teacher (Huston & Weaver, 2007; Knight, 2016; Rhodes & Beneicke, 2002).

The instructional coach is a collaborative partner for teachers (Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2009, 2011). Instructional coaches collaborate with teachers to reflect, analyze, observe, experiment, and adjust instruction to impact student learning (Desimone & Pak 2016; Knight, 2004, 2011; Kraft, Blazer, and Hogan, 2018). Teachers should trust the instructional coach in order to discuss and share their experiences and collaborate (Knight, 2011; Margolis et al., 2017). Trust is essential to the teacher/coach relationship (Aguilar, 2013). If a teacher knows they are an equal partner with the coach, they will be more willing to change and share (Knight, 2009, 2011). Teachers must feel their opinions, experiences, and feelings are valued (Thomas, Spelman, Bell, & Briody, 2015) in a coaching relationship. As a reflective partner, the coach can play the role of confidential counselor. A teacher must trust the instructional coach to provide them feedback and collaboration in a non-judgmental manner to assist in building their capacity (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Woulfin & Rigby, 2015).

A study by Vanderburg and Stephens (2010) found that teachers would make changes to instruction because of the collaborative support provided by an instructional coach. Additionally, the study indicated that a collaborative partnership between teacher and coach allowed teachers to learn about their colleagues and their instructional strategies, share the strategies they were using, and discuss individual students with the coach to solve problems involving those individual students. A case study by Margolis et al. (2017) indicated a collaborative relationship between instructional coach and teacher helped impact changes in pedagogy, enriched content knowledge, and provided them an opportunity to interact with peers, rather than feel isolated in their classroom. The instructional coach can also provide a collaborative bridge to facilitate learning between grade levels and content areas (Desimone & Pak, 2016; Margolis et al., 2017). The literature reviewed defines the importance of collaboration between teacher and instructional coach, but it neglects to examine and explore the lived experiences of teachers who transitioned from teacher to coach and how their classroom experiences may translate into the role of coach.

### **Instructional Coach as Facilitator of Professional Development**

Instructional coaches can assist in establishing transferable professional development opportunities for teachers and affect change in instructional practices through the professional development. Teachers are more likely to change their classroom strategies and structures when coaches come into their classrooms and model strategies or observe (Knight, 2009; Poglinco & Bach, 2004). Johnson (2009) indicated that instructional coaching could assist in increased instructional capacity in schools through transferable professional development that provided professional dialogue and reflection, observation to improve instructional practices, and assistance with planning and curriculum. Aguilar (2013) described instructional coaching as

professional development that helps teachers build instructional toolboxes and increase their capacity in the classroom.

Instructional coaches and their ability to serve as a facilitator of professional development in a school building helps create a paradigm shift in instructional practices. Kretlow and Barthomew's (2010) study examined the impact of coaching and how teachers found it more effective than the typical one-day workshop or afterschool training. Additionally, Darling - Hammond and Rothman's (2011) report found that instructional coaching met the criteria for effective professional development. Mangin and Dunsmore (2015) found that instructional coaches can be effective facilitators of professional development that impact both systematic and individual reform in schools. Desimone and Pak's (2016) study implicated instructional coaching as high-quality professional development that addressed the needs of federal mandates and noted its effectiveness through content focus and its ability to provide active learning for teachers that was sustainable and coherent. More specific to what teachers may find as productive activities for professional growth, Gibbons and Cobb (2017) identified that engaging in the discipline and lesson study, examining student work, and analyzing videotaped lessons were all activities highly valued by teachers and their professional development. Based on federal mandates, the need for personalized professional development, and increasing effective instructional practices, instructional coaching and the literature related to coaching as a form of professional development correlates to teachers transitioning from the classroom to coaching.

### **Transition from Classroom Teacher to Instructional Coach**

As teachers grapple with identity, there is a need to examine why teachers transition roles (Allen, 2018), more specifically why they transition to instructional coaching. Teachers also struggle with the many stressors of state and federal mandates, increasing student achievement,

finding new/innovative instructional strategies to impact student achievement, and they may desire a transition to a different role in education, rather than leaving education entirely (Smith et al., 2016). Additionally, teachers who transition to instructional coaches may have felt stagnant in their current role and wanted to find new paths for learning and growth (Cox, 2015; Wax & Wertheim, 2015). The instructional coach can serve many different instructional roles that impact teacher professional development, including: reflective partner (of instructional practices), organizer (lessons, pacing), observer, co-teacher, and analyst (assessment and student learning) (Margolis et al., 2017). The transition from the classroom to coaching could correlate to the former teacher's need to utilize his/her strengths as a highly qualified teacher to not only assist fellow teachers to grow as educators, but also to use what he/she has learned as he/she works with teachers to grow and learn themselves. A strength of a teacher's transition to coach lies in prior classroom experiences, expertise, and how he/she can use that to assist other teachers with the many demands they face from state, federal, and local mandates.

There is a lack of literature specifically addressing the experiences of a teacher who transitions to coach. Literature relating to an early childhood teacher's personal journey to instructional coach and how she perceived her new role indicated a balance of mentoring classroom teachers, working with students in the classroom, and finding new resources to share with teachers (Cataldo, 2013). In contrast, a description of an experienced teacher who transitioned to math coach and how the four components of the math coach's identity reveals that he felt he was a supporter of teachers' and students, he continued to learn as an educator, and he was a supporter of the school as a whole (Chval et al., 2010). Much of the literature focuses on teacher transitioning to coach/mentor to school leader or relationships between the teacher/administrator/instructional coach and instructional leadership (Neumerski, 2014).

Examining the transition from teacher to coach and how one constructed identity indicated that the coach had multiple identities through the eyes of a literacy coach (Rainville & Jones, 2008). Suarez's (2017) personal testament from classroom to literacy coach defined her fear of not being successful and how she recognized that fear was unfounded and instead it was a decision she would never regret. Teacher identity, how it impacts personal and professional histories (Flores & Day, 2006), and understanding educator's (teachers and instructional coaches) work in school can be affected by the professional landscape (Hargreaves, 2010) and could correlate to the transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach.

The reasoning as to why a classroom teacher could have transitioned to instructional coach is evident in the literature that discusses the attempt for the instructional coach to function as onsite professional development for teachers (Aguilar, 2013; Desimone & Pak, 2016; Knight 2016; Mangin & Dunismore, 2015) and to improve school culture and teacher collaboration (Guiney, 2001; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Based on the role of instructional coach and their former role as an experienced classroom teacher, the transition could be connected to classroom experiences and how they could utilize those experiences to impact peer's instructional strategies (Aguilar, 2013).

There are numerous studies that discuss and define instructional coaching, the role of the coach, and the impacts of federal and state mandates to utilize the instructional coach as a catalyst for increasing student achievement and impacting instructional practices, but there is a lack of literature exploring the experiences of teachers who transitioned from the classroom to the role of instructional coach. Additionally, although the teacher turned coach is a highly qualified classroom educator, more research is needed to understand teachers' experiences as they moved into and through the role of instructional coach.

## **Teacher Self-efficacy and Identity**

Teachers' sense of efficacy is affected by the values he/she holds, what they experience, and the contexts in which they work (Brooks, 2016). Additionally, how teachers are treated and supported contributes to self-efficacy. Teacher efficacy impacts decisions teachers make and professional choices (Woolfolk, 2013). Self-efficacy and identity are important for teachers to develop because they are both required in the decision-making process (Ignat & Clipa, 2010). Self-efficacy can be connected to teacher career trajectories (Clandinin et al., 2015). Although self-efficacy affects teacher perceptions of their abilities to provide quality instruction, it can be impeded by internal and external factors.

A teacher's sense of worth can be impacted both internally (self) and externally (others) and can impact their role in education. Teachers who do not meet state or federal assessment scores often feel they are inept and suffer feelings of guilt, or loss (Pishghadam et al., 2013). Although Grissom et al.'s study (2014) indicated a positive trend regarding teachers' satisfaction/self-efficacy and the implementation of NCLB, many teachers feel the stress of assessment contributes to their sense of self as educators (Grissom et al., 2014; Lerous & Theoret, 2014). Teacher identity and self-efficacy (Allen, 2018; Ellis et al., 2017; Mawhinney & Rinke, 2017) contributes to why a teacher may stay in education or leave. Performance in the classroom, commitment to teaching, and remaining in education is influenced by teacher efficacy (Ware & Kitsantis, 2007). A teachers' self-efficacy is often viewed as their ability to plan, organize, and carry out activities to attain educational goals (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). As teachers may internally struggle with self-efficacy, there are also external factors that can impact both as well.

The demands of teaching and the support teachers receive from administrators can be correlated to self-efficacy. Teachers who do not feel supported by administration with discipline, time pressures, and classroom autonomy often feel they are undervalued and unworthy of praise (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). If a teacher feels undervalued or inept because of lack of support from administration, it can lead them to leave or change roles. Additionally, if a teacher feels there is a lack of trust, they may experience negative feelings of self-efficacy and struggle in the school (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2014). The negative feelings a teacher could experience because of inadequate support and understanding from administration is documented in research and literature (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010; Tickle, Chang & Kim, 2011) and is an external factor that impacts the self-efficacy of teachers.

Teachers' professional identities are mediated by their personal and professional histories (Flores & Day, 2006). As noted by Brooks (2016), "understanding teacher identity is an important part of understanding teacher work and how it can be affected by the professional knowledge landscape" (p. 63). Hargreaves' (2010) research emphasized the importance of emotion and how they can contribute to teacher identity and professional practice. There is a lack of knowledge connecting how teacher self-efficacy could correlate to professional transitions in education, specifically the transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach.

### **Teacher Attrition and Retention**

Although some teachers leave the field entirely (You & Conley, 2014), others choose different roles within the educational field (Bogler & Nir, 2015; Ingersoll, 2016). Recurring themes in the literature suggest that a lack of satisfaction in their role as a classroom teacher (Barnatt et al., 2017; Bogler & Nir, 2014; Ingersoll, 2003, 2016; Kapa & Gimber, 2017; Roch & Sai, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010) often leads teachers to leave education (Ingersoll, 2001;

Hancock, 2015; Mawhinney & Rinke, 2017; Rinke & Mawhinney, 2017; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014; You & Conley, 2014). Many teachers struggle with satisfaction in the classroom for the same reasons they may struggle with self-efficacy and identity. Research indicated that a lack of support from administration and the consistent demand to provide instructional practices that meet the diverse needs of students contributes greatly to teacher retention and attrition (Kapa & Gimbert, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Tickle, Chang & Kim, 2011).

Estimates of the attrition and retention of teachers varies, but an analysis of the National Schools and Staffing Survey indicated that between 17-46% of new teachers leave in the first five years (Gray & Taie 2015; Ingersoll, 2003). Teachers new to the profession often leave because of unrealistic expectations (Simos, 2013), lack of support (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), and emotional exhaustion (Richter et al., 2013). Novice teachers may have unrealistic expectations because they may have completed their student teaching in a school that is completely different from the school they first, officially teach in; they may experience a different set of values and expectations within the school culture of their first teaching job and be unable to cope or deal with the stressors involved. New teachers benefit from mentors and if they do not have a reflective partner or resource for professional growth, it could impact their decision to stay or leave education (Richter et al., 2013). Additionally, new teachers, like veteran teachers, can become exhausted from the consistently growing demands in education, such as differentiating learning for diverse learners, teaching to the test, providing innovative instructional practices, and attending to a myriad of student behaviors in the classroom (Tickle et al., 2011).

Veteran teachers who leave the classroom prior to retirement often do so because they are more satisfied with work/life balance and their ability to make a difference outside of the classroom (Goldring, Taie, & Riddles, 2014), although they may struggle if they transition to a new career (Rinke, 2013). Research contends that there is an issue, in education, to retain and recruit teachers (Ingersoll, 2001, 2016; Ingersoll et al., 2014; Olsen & Anderson, 2007). It is important to explore the reasons teachers (both novice and veteran) leave the profession because it could correlate to the experiences of the transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach.

Although some teachers stay in education (Allen, 2018; Lankford, Loen, McEachin, Miller & Wyckoff, 2014; He, Cooper, & Tangredi, 2015; Hong, 2012; Ellis et al., 2017), there is little research to analyze why teachers stay and change roles, more specifically, why teachers transition from the classroom to instructional coach. The gap in literature implores the question, why do teachers transition from the classroom to a role in peer classrooms as an instructional coach?

### **Teacher Transitions**

Studies concerning professional transitions in education focus on mentorship and leadership roles (Ingersoll, 2001, 2016; Ingersoll et al., 2014; Olsen & Anderson, 2007). Although the literature does provide studies about teacher mentors (Bullough 2005; Rhodes & Beneicke, 2002), who hold a role similar to that of an instructional coach and primarily work with new teachers, there is a lack of research about their experience when they transition to mentor and why they made the transition. Research about transitions in education also includes teachers who transition to different grade levels or buildings (Carlyon, 2014), teachers who transition from teacher to literacy or math coach (Chval et al., 2010).

Studies about teachers who transition to a role of mentor indicated the need for professional development and a clearer understanding of mentor roles (Leshem, 2014; Smith, 2011). Teachers who transition into leadership roles often do so because of encouragement to do so or have a desire to lead (Carver, 2016; Smith, Hayes, & Lyons, 2016). Teacher leaders, although they are considered highly qualified educators, often experienced frustration over organizational challenges, resistance from peers, and lack of professional development for their new role (Carver, 2016; Ross et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2016). Those teachers who seek roles as mentors or instructional coaches are often seeking to promote and foster change that positively impacts student learning and instructional practices (Collett, 2012) through individualized professional development (Desimone & Pak, 2016; Rhodes & Beneicke, 2016). Self-efficacy, professional identity, and self-perception also factor into why a teacher may choose to transition from the classroom to a mentor or instructional coach (Huston & Weaver, 2007; Leshem, 2014)

Studies about literacy coaches and math coaches have explored their sense of identity and the roles they filled (MacPhee & Jewett, 2016; Chval et al., 2010). Findings from both studies indicate the need for professional development in the first years of coaching, a clear understanding of expectations of the coach in a school building, and a support structure to reflect with other coaches. Additionally, the studies indicated both the literacy coach and math coach were often expected to be the content expert, creating an imbalance of power between teacher and coach and ultimately changing the dynamics of a collaborative environment. Instructional coaches, unlike content area coaches, work with any content area or grade level; exploring the experiences of a teacher who transitioned from the role of classroom teacher to (a multiple content area expert) instructional coach will fill the gap in the literature.

### **Teacher Professional Development**

Professional development in schools often lacks the ability to produce outcomes that address individual teacher needs, work to increase student achievement, and improve instructional practices. One-day seminars are viewed as ineffective because they are limited in their ability to support consistent, sustained improvement (Rivera-McCutchen & Panero, 2013). Professional development is often designed to reflect school and division goals, rather than teacher goals; it is often seen as a process, rather than an event (Avidov-Ungar, 2016). Teachers tend to resist or do not implement professional development unless they see the relevance or necessity in the learned practices. Effective professional development in schools should meet the growing need to individualized teacher learning that can be effectively implemented in the classroom in a sustainable manner (Avidov-Ungar, 2016; Desimone, 2009; McDonald, 2014).

Traditional professional development in schools often consists of a workshop approach, carried out in isolation from the natural learning environment. Teachers often complain that this approach is not helpful because it either does not address what they need to improve, it is not sustainable, nor consistently practiced after the workshop (Rivera-McCutchen & Panero, 2013). To address the need for professional growth, professional development needs to be transferable to instructional practices that impact student growth. Teachers engaged in meaningful professional development can take what they have learned, apply it to their current practices, and build their teaching toolkit. The literature suggested that the process of professional development, as it takes place throughout teachers' professional lives, needs to be grounded by individual motivation and reflect their commitment to improvement and growth as an educator (Desimone et al., 2002; Furner & McCulla, 2018; Girvan, Conneely, & Tangney, 2016)

Professional development must include activities, beyond the traditional conference/workshop approach, to promote teacher growth. Collaboration with other teachers in

the form of a professional learning community allows teachers to work together to grow as professionals. When teachers collaborate and learn together as a group, it can allow them a chance to exchange ideas and share their experiences with colleagues. Collaborative professional development opportunities give teachers the chance to learn from one another through observation, reflection, and experimentation (Gravani, 2012; Meirink, Imants, Meijer, & Verloop, 2010). Additionally, professional development opportunities should include activities that teachers are interested in, such as developing curriculum, assisting with the school improvement plan, or inquiry/action research (Desimone, 2009).

Instructional coaching, as noted in previous sections, is an individualized form of professional development for teachers that allows teachers to work with a highly qualified colleague to impact instructional practices. Instructional coaches also work with teachers to build capacity. Professional development correlates to one's sense of self as an educator and reflects their commitment to education. Professional development is important to explore in this study because it may provide context within the experiences of teachers who transitioned from teacher to instructional coach; the transition of roles could be viewed as professional growth.

### **Guiding Adult Learners**

A teacher who transitions from classroom teacher to instructional coach also must transition from teaching students to teaching adults. Adult learners need to be actively involved in learning to acquire new knowledge and skills (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011). Adult learners need to be presented opportunities to share knowledge and experience with others (Henschke, 2011; Hill, 2014; Peterson & Ray, 2013) and experience scenarios that allow them to observe, reflect, and explore (Ambler, 2015; Owens, Pogodzinski, & Hill, 2016). On an

individual level, the teacher who transitions to coach is providing professional development that correlates to the adult learning needs of the peer they are coaching (Cox, 2015).

An instructional coach, as they work with adult learners, should understand that adults use their prior learning to assist in new learning, they learn when they are ready, and that they need to be heard (Cox, 2015; Wax & Wertheim, 2015). Because there is a difference between the learning processes of adults and children, the teacher transitioning from classroom to coaching will need to shift how they approach teaching and learning as they work with adults. Teacher turned instructional coach needs to adapt how they taught in the classroom to address the needs of the adult learners they serve by attuning themselves to the learner's agenda through non-judgmental listening and open questioning (Cox, 2015).

Adult learners are more willing to engage in the learning process if they can use the newfound knowledge to heighten levels of personal or professional success (Knowles, 1970). The former classroom teacher who transitioned to instructional coach, as an adult learners may have felt a stall in their career as a result of remaining in a position for too long and are therefore seeking new paths for learning and growing professionally (Cox, 2015; Wax & Wertheim, 2015).

### **Adult Career Transitions**

A growing amount of research regarding career adaptability and career construction (Savickas et al., 2009) can aid in studying the experiences of a teacher as they move in and through the transition of classroom teacher to instructional coach. One of the constructs within career construction includes how one copes with transitions in their occupation (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Adults, as they transition from one career to another, could benefit from hearing the transitional experiences of others as they construct their career path (Del Corso & Rehfuß, 2011). Studies beyond Savickas' career construction note the importance of relating career

decisions to our relationships with others, our sense of self, and our connection to society (Motulsky, 2010). Del Corso and Rehfyss' (2011) study on narrative approaches to adult career transitions and viewing them in the context of one's individual needs, interests and abilities provides an understanding of the importance of an individual's story as they construct career choices throughout their lives and transition from one role to another. Career construction and adaptation to adult career transitions assumes that people prepare for, enter and exit roles through examining and reflecting upon social expectations and personal expectations within the roles (Rudolph et al., 2016). Work and careers are central to the life of an adult and shaping identity (Fouad & Bynner, 2008). Adult career transitions can be voluntary or involuntary and can be a result of the individual making the transition in optimal circumstances, in voluntary circumstances, and using the capabilities and resources to make the transition (Fouad & Bynner, 2008). The literature involving adult career adaptability and career construction can assist in providing context to the study of teachers who transition from the classroom to instructional coaching as it relates to the phenomenon and how others experienced. There are multiple studies about career transitions in the health field, military to civilian, college to first job, and transitions that include substantial changes in occupation (Damale, 2015), but there is a lack of research into the study of the experiences of teachers who transitioned to instructional coach.

### **Summary**

The literature review of this study focused on instructional coaching (definitions and roles) and contextual research about teacher self-efficacy/identity, why teachers stay or leave education, guiding adult learners and career transitions, and teacher professional development. The research within the literature review helped to provide context as the study sought to examine the experiences of teachers who transitioned roles from the classroom to instructional

coach. Examining and exploring their experiences included, but were not limited to: their personal journey through the transition, how they transitioned from educating students to adults, and what they will take from the transition.

The instructional coach can offer schools on-site professional development to meet the individual needs of teachers. An experienced teacher, as a coach, can assist in increasing engaging instructional practices and student achievement. A strength of a teacher transitioning to coach lies in their prior classroom experiences, expertise, and how they can use that to assist other teachers with the many demands they face from state, federal, and local mandates. A teacher who transitions from the classroom to a coach has proven to be a more effective resource for professional development than traditional professional development (conferences/seminars). There is little research to analyze why teachers stay and change roles, more specifically, what are the experiences of teacher's transitioning from the role of classroom teacher to instructional coach. The literature reviewed establishes that there is an issue, in education, to retain and recruit teachers, although some teachers stay in education. Although there is a multitude of literature relevant to the contributions already made regarding instructional coaching, the development of instructional coaching, and the roles of instructional coaches, there is a lack of research exploring the experiences of teachers who leave the classroom to transition to the role of instructional coach.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

### Overview

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of 13 teachers who transitioned from the classroom to become instructional coaches. Instructional coaches chosen for this study include group members from two online forums and are located throughout the United States and across the world. The classroom teacher to instructional coach experience can generally be defined as the decisions and circumstances that led a classroom teacher to pursue a role of instructional coach, what they experienced as they moved through the role, and what they will share with other teachers considering the transition from classroom to instructional coaching.

The theories that guided this study were Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) transition theory as it provides a framework for the decision-making process for the experiences of teachers transitioning from the role as a classroom practitioner to a catalyst for professional development of peer educators in their classrooms (instructional coach) (Knight 2011, 2016; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Carter, 2016), and Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory as it provides a lens for examining how an individual's beliefs about themselves influences changes and other events in their lives. Chapter Three of this study provides a comprehensive look at the research design for the study, a detailed description of the process for selecting participants, and inclusive descriptions of the research sites. Additionally, research procedures, to include detailed descriptions of data collection and analysis methods, are addressed, as well as steps taken to ensure trustworthiness. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations of the study.

## Design

A qualitative study was conducted using a transcendental phenomenological approach to describe teacher's experiences as they transitioned from the role of classroom teacher to the role of instructional coach. A qualitative research approach was appropriate for this study as it focused on teacher perspectives and the significance of their experiences (Creswell, 2013) as they transitioned. This study provides a holistic description of the experiences of teachers who transitioned from classroom teacher to instructional coach from textual and structural descriptions, found through data analysis, using a phenomenological research design (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological research can be defined as human science research conducted to examine the individual experiences of a phenomenon. In a phenomenological research study, the researcher determines structures within the experiences through "descriptions of the situation in which the experience occurs" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). This study focused on the perspectives of teachers and their experiences as they transitioned through the phenomenon. As they described their individual experiences, I determined structures and themes established from data collection to inform the phenomenological study. The data collected from interviews conducted face to face, an online bulletin board focus group, and a hypothetical letter to teachers considering a transition to instructional coach are organized into themes to help answer research questions.

Through the lens of transcendental phenomenological research, I examined the descriptions of individuals who experienced the phenomenon by setting aside my own prejudgment's (*epoche*) and prior beliefs to remain open and receptive to the individual's experiences of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Within the conceptual framework of transcendental phenomenological research, I was guided by Moustakas' (1994) approach that

includes *epoche* (setting aside prejudgments and beliefs), phenomenological reduction (textual descriptions of meanings and principles within the phenomenon), and imaginative variation (structural descriptions and principles of the phenomenon), as a process to gain understanding, awareness, and knowledge informing the study. This framework allowed me to examine the experiences and the situations that precipitated the experiences. Moustakas described the three processes of phenomenological reduction, horizontalization, and imaginative variation used in the conceptual framework of transcendental phenomenology that will allow me to examine the experiences of an individual as they describe their experience with the phenomenon. The primary purpose of a qualitative phenomenological study is to describe and clarify the complex experiences of an individual (Polkinghorne, 2005).

Using transcendental phenomenology as the design for this study was appropriate because it describes the experiences of individuals that have left the classroom to become an instructional coach, what they experienced as they moved in and through the phenomenon, and, and what they would share with other teachers considering a transition from classroom to instructional coaching. This qualitative study provides rich, thick data, as it relies on verbal and written data and analysis to study the phenomenon in the natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln (1994), as cited in Creswell, 2013). Examining the phenomenon allowed me to focus less on my interpretation of the phenomenon and focus more on the individuals who have experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The results of the research holistically describe the experiences of the teachers moving from their role in the classroom to their role of instructional through textual descriptions formed in the data analysis using a phenomenological research design (Moustakas, 1994).

## Research Questions

The central research question for this study is:

What are the experiences of teachers who transitioned from the role of classroom teacher to instructional coach?

The sub-questions are as follows:

1. What key motivational factors influence teachers to transition from the role of classroom teacher to instructional coach?
2. What practical knowledge do teachers acquire about instructional coaching and the role of instructional coach as they fully transition into the role?
3. What valuable advice or information would instructional coaches find significant to share with current classroom teachers who are considering the same transition?

## Setting

The setting used for the study were two online forums focused on instructional coaching and sharing resources, ideas, and reflecting upon the practices used in instructional coaching. Group members in each of the two online forums included coaches from different areas of the United States. Each of the forums used was a closed group, meaning group members requesting to join must be vetted by administrators of the forums to ensure accountability of group members. Accountability of the group protects group members from online soliciting of products, inappropriate posts, scams, fake profiles, and monitoring of discussions. The administrators were notified of my intent to gather participants using each of the forums and accepted my request to use the forums to find participants for the study.

Both forums included instructional coaches from elementary and secondary schools and former instructional coaches. The forums were designed for collaboration of instructional

coaches in different educational settings with varying levels of experience as a coach. Forum One includes 1,336 members, was established in March of 2017, and is part of an initiative to promote and implement (but discussion in the forum is not limited to) research based digital learning in classrooms. Forum Two includes 3,433 members, was established in August of 2017, and is designed for open collaboration and sharing of educational and instructional information between instructional coach members. Each of the forums includes online storage for members to share videos, files, events, and photos related to instructional coaching and coaching practices. The forums were purposefully chosen because each of groups contain different demographics of instructional coaching models/roles, a range of grade levels and content areas, and a variety of areas where coaches are located.

### **Participants**

I used purposeful sampling, for it provides information rich data to inform the phenomenon of a study (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2014). The participants included former classroom teachers who have become instructional coaches and are members of online instructional coaching forums. The goal of sampling in a qualitative study is to select participants who can provide significant contributions to achieve thematic saturation of the phenomenon to the extent that no new emerging themes can be extracted from the data (Moustakas, 1994). Purposeful and criterion-based sampling were used to increase the richness of data (Creswell, 2013).

Participants in this study came from a variety of geographical locations and serve in a diverse population of schools and are currently instructional coaches. Purposeful sampling included only instructional coaches who had previously taught for at least five years prior to becoming a coach and who are currently serving as an instructional coach (Creswell, 2013). Criterion sampling ensures that “all participants have the experience of the phenomenon being studied”

(Creswell, 2013, p.155); all participants in the study need to be teachers who transitioned from the classroom to instructional coach and currently serve as an instructional coach. The study included a sample size of 13 instructional coaches from different areas of the United States who have transitioned from classroom teacher to instructional coach. Although there were 13 participants for the interview, 10 participants completed the hypothetical letter, and 11 participants completed the focus group criteria. Those who could not complete all three data collection tasks were unable to do so because of familial, work, or personal obligations. Maximum variation in this study was increased based on participants from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, previous grade level/content area experience as former teachers, and gender; essential criteria for participant selection included that the participant has experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994) and multiple perspectives on a topic and diverse views are important aspects of the qualitative research process (Creswell, 2013).

Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

Pseudonym	Age	Years Teaching	Years Coaching	Grade Level(s)
Marjorie	58	31	2	Elementary/ Middle School
Bianca	35	11	1	Middle School
Veronica	31	7	2	Elementary/Middle School
Martin	32	8	2	Elementary/Middle School
Jane	34	9	4	Elementary
Lisa	38	9	4	High School
Anne	42	17	1	Elementary/Middle School
Helen	45	21	3	Middle School/High School
Betty	39	9	2	Elementary
Sally	42	14	6	Elementary
Sabrina	52	25	9	Elementary/Middle School
Tina	42	14	1	Elementary
Nanette	48	15	10	Elementary/Middle School

**Procedures**

Prior to seeking Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for this study, I procured approval (see Appendix A) from the administrators of two online forums whose purpose is to ensure solicitation within the forum is ethical and will not harm the intent of the forums or the participants. After administrators approved my request, I posted a message on the forum's Online Focus Groups asking members to private message me if they would be interested in being a participant of a doctoral study regarding teachers who moved from the classroom to

instructional coach. Interested members privately messaged me their email and were told they would be contacted again after IRB approval and completion of a pilot study. No data, other than email addresses, was collected. Pre-solicitation of possible participants was conducted to ensure there would be enough participants for the study. Additionally, two experts in the field reviewed the questions for the Interviews and the online bulletin board focus group. One of the individuals holds a doctoral degree in instruction and curriculum from the University of Virginia. He currently serves as the Director of Instructional Design and Advanced Placement with the College Board. He was formerly a U.S. History teacher and department chair and worked with instructional coaches. The other individual currently serves as a director of teaching and learning and was previously an assistant principal and principal in two middle schools in Virginia. She holds an Ed.D. in organizational leadership, works with instructional coaches in a school division in central Virginia, and assists with retention and recruiting new teachers. Each of the expert reviewers have background knowledge to assist me in ensuring data collection and research questions support and address the study's validity. One of the experts suggested I ensure that my research questions directly correlate to transitional theory (Schlossberg, 1981) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1994), and suggested that I keep up with my reflexive journal to avoid bias and my own opinions to emerge through the data collection. I reviewed the interview questions and the online bulletin board questions to ensure they directly correlated to the two theories. The other expert indicated that the data collection was unique and supported the study's validity.

Immediately after IRB approval, I completed a pilot study. The procedures for the pilot study were identical to the procedures of the actual study. Data collected and participants in the pilot study will not be included in the study. The pilot study was designed to "refine data

collection plans and develop relevant lines of questions” (Creswell, 2013, p. 165) and assisted me in making any adjustments needed prior to the actual study. Two participants in the pilot study completed all three of the data collection activities. Interviews took place to assist me with timing, to ensure online interviewing using web-based video worked correctly, to confirm data can be recorded and played back for analysis, to measure timing of the interviews, and provided me an opportunity to transcribe the interviews into text. Additionally, interviewing individuals during the pilot study helped me to avoid sharing my own thoughts and focus on asking questions and actively listening to the participant’s descriptions and reflections. Using the online bulletin board focus group in the pilot study helped me determine if there are enough interactions between participants to gather data for the study and how to facilitate the discussion and timing of the discussions to gather data. The hypothetical letter to a teacher considering the transition to instructional coach provided me an example of the length and depth of information participants may provide me and also assist with adjusting the questions/guidelines for the letter, should I need to.

After the pilot study was completed and adjustments were made to the activities, I posted on the two Facebook groups asking for possible participants to privately message me their email address (see Appendix B for the Social Media Post) and I emailed possible participants an overview about the study through a recruitment letter (see Appendix C) and Google Form Demographics Survey (see Appendix D). In the recruitment letter, participants were informed about the intent of the study, their role in the study, the requirements/time frame for the study, and a link to the Google Form Demographic Survey (see Appendix D). All participants were given the option to leave the study at any time should they wish to do so. Participants were given the opportunity to read transcripts of the data compiled to ensure honesty and credibility,

in addition to the opportunity to receive the results of the qualitative study.

The demographics survey (see Appendix D) was purposefully designed to obtain biographical and demographic information, in addition to how many years they taught prior to becoming an instructional coach and indicate times/dates they are available for interviews and specific dates for participation in an online bulletin board focus group. A survey was used in this study strictly to obtain biographical and demographic information about individual participants in the study. The survey included information such as participant gender, years in the classroom, years as an instructional coach, age, potential times/dates for interviews and focus group, and if they had access to specific web video applications. Information gathered from the survey is included in descriptions of the participants and will help me determine viable candidates for the study. Pseudonyms will be used for individual participant descriptions. The criteria for purposeful sampling in this study included teachers who have at least five years classroom experience and now hold a position as an instructional coach. Instructional coaches who have not had at least five years teaching experience were not included in the study. A qualitative study using a transcendental phenomenological design requires thick, rich data collection (Creswell, 2013). Data collection in a transcendental phenomenological study begins with selecting appropriate participants.

After obtaining participants for the study, I shared a Google Document Consent Form (see Appendix F) with those chosen. Participants not chosen received a thank you email for offering to be participant (see Appendix E). The consent form included the purpose of the study, the procedures of the study (interview, focus group, and hypothetical letter to teacher considering a transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach), the risks and benefits of participating in the study, compensation for participating in the study, confidentiality within the study, the

voluntary nature of the study, and contact information for questions. Participants were able to immediately sign the form using HelloSign and a copy of the form was sent to me and the participant. The consent form delineated the risks and benefits of the study, steps to ensure participants remain anonymous using pseudonyms, steps to ensure data collection and analysis would be safe and protected, and the ability for participants to gain access to findings of the research. Participants in the study must have experienced the phenomenon, be willing to participate in the study, and understand that their experiences will be recorded, documented, analyzed, and published (Moustakas, 1994).

As a professional courtesy to instructional coaches, they selected times and dates for the interview based on both researcher and participant availability. The time frame for interviews to take place included a two-week period. Individual participants were asked to answer 14 open-ended questions (see Appendix G) regarding prior circumstances and situations which led them to the transition into the role of instructional coach, their experiences with the transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach, what they experienced as they transitioned, what they are currently experiencing, and what they would share with other teachers considering the transition from the classroom to coaching. The interviews utilized a web video application (Google Hangouts, Skype, or WebEx, etc.) dependent upon which the individual had access to) and each interview was recorded using a Sony voice recorder. Interviews were audio recorded to protect the data. Each interview was saved on a password protected hard drive.

The online bulletin board focus group took place over a period of a 10 days. The online bulletin board focus group took place using a web-based Online Focus Group platform named Padlet. Focus group participants answered a total of five, open-ended questions (see Appendix H) related to their experiences transitioning from teacher to instructional coach. Each day,

during Week #1, a focus group question was posted for participants to answer on Padlet. Participants were asked to respond to one question a day and to return to comment or add to another participant's post. Focus groups allowed participants to share their experiences with each other and provided me information that was missed or not communicated in interviews. Participants were given a total of 10 days to respond to the question and another participant's post.

Participants were given the guidelines (see Appendix I) for the hypothetical letter to a teacher considering a transition from the classroom to coaching upon being selected as part of the study and the deadline for submitting the letter to me will be the week after the focus group Online Focus Group has been completed. Allowing participants to complete the interview, and the online bulletin board focus group, allowed them the opportunity to reflect upon what they may want to share with another in a virtual setting. Participants shared their letter using a Google Document or emailed it to me as an attached Word Document.

Verification of dates, times, and locations for the interviews and focus group discussion were sent to each participant prior to initiation of data collection. During the interview and online bulletin board focus group process, instructional coaches were reassured that all data/information obtained will be kept secure and there are no incorrect or correct answers. Additionally, instructional coaches were told that the interviews will be audio-recorded using a Sony voice recorder with USB capability. Data was saved on a hard drive and protected by a password. After all interviews took place, I transcribed the data. When I finished transcribing the interviews and the online bulletin board focus group discussion was completed, I sent thank you emails (see Appendix J) and copies of interview transcription(s) to each individual for approval. Data was collected through interviews, a focus group, and hypothetical letter to

teachers considering transitioning from classroom to instructional coach to provide me realities constructed through the lived experiences of individuals (Creswell, 2013) and multiple realities based on individual experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

The intent of using the interview first, the focus group next, and the letter submission throughout interviews and the online bulletin board focus group discussion was to allow the participants ample time to reflect on their experiences on their own first, to share their experiences with the group next (using what they reflected on during the interview), and use reflections from their own experiences and peer's experiences to help formulate a hypothetical letter to teachers who may want to transition to the role of instructional coach. Through a deep, rich, analysis of the data collected orally from individuals and a group, and a written reflection from the individual, I was able to triangulate the data and use horizontalization to construct meaning units that indicated themes within the experiences of teachers who transitioned from the classroom to a role of instructional coach.

### **The Researcher's Role**

The researcher is a human instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) collecting data for this transcendental phenomenological study. It is important for me, a former instructional coach, to bracket previous experiences and set aside preconceived notions or ideas in relation to the study (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas recommended using *epoche* to set aside judgements allowed the researcher to use the data to provide a fresh view of the experience (see Appendix L). As I transitioned from teacher to coach, I knew that the many stressors of being a classroom teacher greatly contributed to my decision. I also know that one of my administrators realized that I had a natural path to become an administrator and instructional coaching was part of that path, therefore I believe that is part of the decision I made to transition from teacher to instructional

coach. Additionally, in my experiences moving through instructional coaching, I found I craved a more productive role in helping other teachers avoid frustration and stress. I enjoyed working with teachers, reflecting with them, and helping them grow using my own classroom experiences. Setting aside my own personal convictions was essential to understanding the experiences of the participants involved in the study.

Other than being members of the instructional forums, I had no professional relationship with the participants in the study. Although shared experiences with participants (Creswell, 2013) could skew the data, I employed *epoche* (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34) to ensure my experiences were bracketed from those participating in the study (see Appendix L). As I collected data and analyzed it, I kept a reflexive journal (see Appendix L) to safeguard the data from being skewed and ensure the data spoke for itself.

### **Data Collection**

A qualitative study using a transcendental phenomenological design requires thick, rich data collection (Creswell, 2013). This study included a screening survey (see Appendix D) used to vet possible participants and the following data collection tools: demographic survey, interviews, online bulletin board focus group discussion, and a hypothetical letter to a teacher who may want to transition to instructional coach. Data collection did not begin until IRB approval was established. After IRB approval, participants were selected based on a screening survey (see Appendix D) that provided information about whether or not they met the criteria of being a classroom teacher for at least five years and currently serve as an instructional coach. Triangulation of the collected data, noted above, helped confirm findings or resolved discrepancies (Gall et al., 2014) in this study. Open ended, interview questions consisted of 14 open-ended questions (see Appendix G) designed to explore the experiences of teachers who

transitioned from the classroom to instructional coach. A focus group was conducted in an online setting and used questions noted in the online bulletin board focus group discussion questions (see Appendix H). All of the study participants responded to the open-ended questions to share their experiences as they transitioned from teacher to coach, what they are experiencing, and what they would share with teachers considering the transition. Focus groups were important to this study because they allowed participants the opportunity to express feelings or opinions, they may not have shared in a more intimate setting such as interviews (Gall et al., 2014). Focus group discussions allowed for “generation of new ideas formed within the social context, whereas interviews encourage self-reflection on issues that could be distorted if social pressure were placed on the individual” (Breen, 2006, p. 9). Online Focus Groups allow for deeper learning opportunities where individuals can think critically, make connections to what others have shared, and share what they have learned with others (Johnson et al., 2017). Participant’s hypothetical letters to teachers who may be considering transitioning from classroom teacher to instructional coach provided me narrative reflections of the transition and were analyzed for themes. Participants were given guidelines for writing (see Appendix H) their letters to assist me in gathering data.

## **Interviews**

Data collection typically consists of the long interview method (Moustakas, 1994). The interview is considered an informal, interactive process consisting of open-ended questions and reflections (Moustakas, 1994). Using semi-structured interview questions in open-ended interviews allowed for modification and further participant reflection and were designed to collect thick, rich data critical to a transcendental phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013). Interviewing individuals allowed participants to describe the phenomenon and what they have

experienced (Creswell, 2013). Interviews were conducted individually, using Google Hangouts at an agreed upon time. The interview included social conversation and a “meditative activity aimed at creating a relaxed and trusting atmosphere” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114) to provide the participant a trustworthy environment to share honest and comprehensive reflection regarding their experience with the phenomenon.

The interview process included interview questions (see Appendix G) that explored the individual experiences of teacher transitioning to coach and sought to provide “rich, vital, substantive descriptions” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116) of the experience of the phenomenon. Interview questions were open ended and recorded to allow teachers who transitioned from the classroom to instructional coach to explore their experiences orally and assisted me in exploring themes and realities of participant’s experiences. Participants answered 14 open-ended questions about their transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach. Using Schlossberg’s (1981) transition theory and Bandura’s (1994) social cognitive theory as a framework, interview questions were created for the participants to discuss how they moved in and through the transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach, and what they would share with teachers considering a transition from classroom to coaching. Interview questions (see Appendix G) for the study are listed below:

#### Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself – where you grew up, your family, what led you to pursue a career in education.
2. What were your impressions of instructional coaches while you were a classroom teacher?

Questions related to the decision to transition:

3. Describe your experiences and attitudes while you were a classroom teacher that existed within the walls of your classroom – frustrations, successes, areas for growth, etc.
4. Describe your experiences and attitudes while you were a classroom teacher that existed outside the walls of your classroom – interactions with administration, professional development, collegial relations, peer interactions/collaboration.
5. What key motivational factors influenced you to transition from the role of classroom teacher to the role of instructional coach?

Questions related to the role of instructional coach:

6. What specific qualities or skills do you feel were necessary to be successful in your new role of instructional coach?
7. What fears or concerns did you have as you considered making the transition are some of your challenges as an instructional coach coming from the classroom? How would you describe them?
8. Please describe your initial feelings or attitudes pertaining to your role as instructional coach.
9. Describe some successes and/or areas of growth that you faced as a new instructional coach.
10. Describe some challenges you faced as a new instructional coach.
11. What helps you succeed in your role as a coach?
  - a. What skills or strategies do you use as you coach?
  - b. How did you learn to connect with teachers/form relationships?
  - c. How do you feel you affect others and their instructional practices as an instructional coach? Teachers? Whole school? Students? Other coaches?

Questions related to what they would want teachers thinking about transitioning to coach to know:

12. Did your thoughts about your own strengths or weaknesses as an educator change as a result of being in the role of an instructional coach?
13. How would you describe your successes and challenges of being an instructional coach to a current classroom teacher considering this transition?
14. Is there anything else you would like to share about your transition from a classroom teacher to the role of instructional coach?

Through the lens of transition theory, the teacher turned instructional coach can experience three types of transitions: anticipated, unanticipated, and non-events (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011) and those transitions occur through the process of moving in, though, and out. Within the process of transitions, individuals can use a coping process defined by the “4 S’s” – situation, self, support, and strategies (Schlossberg, 2011). Bandura’s (1994) social cognitive theory can also be used as a lens, as it relates to situation and self and how self-efficacy impacts transitions through an individual’s beliefs about self, past experiences, and extrinsic motivations. The interview questions were designed and organized to capture the experiences of a teacher who transitioned from the classroom to the role of instructional coach, what the instructional coach experienced as they moved through the role, and what the instructional coach will share with teachers considering a transition from the classroom to instructional coach. Not only did the questions allow me to view the transition from the lens of transition theory, but also to explore the phenomenon through teacher’s descriptions/reflections of the experience/transition and how the transition is a “product of a dynamic interplay of personal and situational influences” (Bandura, 1999, p. 155). Opening questions 1 and 2 provided me the opportunity to

break the ice and allow participants to share some background information about themselves. Questions 3 through 5 were related to the instructional coach's experiences when they decided to move out/transitions out of their role as a classroom teacher into the role of instructional coach. Questions 6 through 11 related to the instructional coach's experiences as they moved through their new role. Questions 12 through 14 related to what the instructional coach could share with a teacher thinking about transitioning from the classroom to the role of instructional coach. Each of the interview questions were designed to explore the transitional experiences of moving in and through the role of classroom teacher turned coach, what the instructional coach would share with teachers thinking about the same transition, and also to explore facets of situation, self, support, and strategies within the transition.

In respect to the instructional coach's schedule, I conducted the interviews during a two-week period. Participants chose times and dates to interview. Interviews were conducted using Google Hangouts and audio recorded using a Samsung audio recorder to protect the data both auditorily. I conducted 13 Interviews with participants that lasted approximately 20-45 minutes. I will determine that follow up interviews were not necessary after reading through interview transcriptions.

### **Online Bulletin Board Focus Group**

Online focus groups allow participants to discuss feelings and opinions they may not have felt comfortable discussing in an individual, face-to-face, interview (Gall et al., 2014). Using instructional coaches from different demographics, geographical areas, schools, and divisions provided synergy and allowed me to uncover the essence of the experience from different perspectives. The focus group discussion took place using a web-based discussion platform named Padlet and will take place over the course of 11 days. Participants were asked to

respond to five questions and to return to comment or add to another participant's post over the course of the 11 days. The group shared their experiences related to the phenomenon and reflected on their experiences together. Focus group questions captured information related to teacher turned instructional coach experiences that may not have been discussed in Interviews or provided additional information to inform the study.

#### Online Bulletin Board Focus Group Questions (see Appendix H)

1. What internal or external factors motivated you to transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach?
2. What were some of the successes and/or challenges that you faced when you were deciding to transition from the classroom to coaching?
3. What were some of the successes and/or challenges that you experienced as you transitioned into the role of instructional coach? Did your attitudes about education and instruction change and if they did, how so?
4. Now that you have completed one year or more as an instructional coach, what are some successes and/or challenges that you would share with other teachers considering such a transition?
5. How did the experiences/situations/stories you encountered as a classroom teacher turned instructional coach challenge or highlight your role as an educator?

The online bulletin board focus group discussion took place online using a web-based platform named Padlet. The focus group took place over a time period of 11 days and included online discussions in a trustworthy environment to share honest and comprehensive reflections regarding their experience with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Padlet allows the administrator of the group and selected participants a transcription of the Online Focus Group.

As a part of member checking, the online bulletin board focus group participants were able to view the individual Padlet questions and answers to correct any incomplete or incorrect data. I ensured focus group data was protected by only allowing participants access to each Padlet question and storing the finished Padlets on an external hard drive that was password protected.

### **Hypothetical Letter to Teacher Considering Instructional Coaching**

A qualitative study using phenomenology as its design benefits from using data outside of the context of the research (Creswell, 2013). Participants in this study were asked to submit a hypothetical letter addressed to teachers who are considering transitioning from the classroom to a role of instructional coach. Participants received a suggested format and content for crafting the letter (see Appendix H). The format for the letter was informal in nature, rather than business format and included narrative information for those teachers considering a transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach. The letter included guidelines (see Appendix I):

1. What situations/experiences led you to transition from the classroom to working with peers in their classroom?
2. What did you experience in your role as an instructional coach, what were some of your successes, struggles, and questions you still have about the transition?
3. What skills or strategies (etc) do you feel you have gained from the transition?
4. What are your hopes and suggestions for others who transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach?

The intent of the letter was to gather data establishing what prompted the teacher to leave the classroom, how they identified themselves as they moved through the transition from the classroom to instructional coaching, and what they learned from the experience thus far. The letter could be written throughout the process of the Interview and the focus group to allow the

instructional coach the opportunity to reflect and explore their experience and also allow for horizontalization of data for “we [researcher and participant] can never exhaust completely our experience of things no matter how many times we reconsider or view them” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 95). The letter provided the participant the opportunity to share in a semi-private manner through written word and was submitted as the interviews and the focus group took place and were completed. Participants could email their letter to me or share it as a Google document.

### **Data Analysis**

Data collection included Interviews, an online bulletin board focus group, and a hypothetical letter to a teacher considering a transition to instructional coach. Each Interview was transcribed to prepare for data analysis and analyzed for emerging themes. Document analysis followed the same process as the Interviews and online bulletin board focus group. Data analysis of all three data sources followed the procedures Moustakas (1994) outlines for conducting a transcendental phenomenological study. Additionally, Saldana’s (2013) coding process for identifying themes and concepts was applied using a deep reflection and analysis of individual experiences of the phenomenon.

### **Phenomenological Reduction**

*Epoche* was used throughout data collection and analysis to ensure that I continually set aside my own beliefs and prejudgments, allowing participant experiences to remain the focus of the study (Moustakas, 1994). I recognized throughout data collection and analysis, I must be “completely open, receptive, and naïve in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon being investigated” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 22) through the process of *epoche*. Using the process of *epoche* in data analysis required me to bracket out my own beliefs and preconceptions as I read and re read the experiences of participants with “new

and receptive eyes” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 89). The reflexive journal (see Appendix L) assisted me in setting aside preconceived beliefs and to focus on the experiences of the participants.

Data was analyzed using Moustakas’ (1994) phenomenological model. I used phenomenological reduction to analyze data repetitively to seek significant statements (Creswell, 2013) and to describe the data’s textural quality (Moustakas, 1994). Because phenomenological studies require understandings of philosophical assumptions and a deep understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013), I used the textural and structural descriptions to create meanings of the participant’s experience with the phenomena to inform the study. Comparing significant statements and developing categories allowed me to consolidate the data to find the “particular reality” (Saldana, 2013, p. 14) of the data to cultivate concepts and themes. Reading and re-reading the data to identify significant statements was essential to phenomenological reduction, for “things become clearer and clearer as they are considered again and again” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 93). Phenomenological reduction of data requires me to use horizontalization to cluster horizons into themes (Moustakas, 1994).

I thoroughly read through each interview, focus group, and narrative at least three times and took notes to find key themes and codes to seek the nature and essence of the phenomenon through horizontalization. Identified themes were highlighted for management of data. Horizontalization is the process the researcher uses to examine the experience the individual describes in a continual basis to extract meanings and static elements within the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Employing horizontalization ensured that each statement “is initially treated as having equal value” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). Statements and questions irrelevant to the study were removed and leave me with horizons and themes emerging as “the grounding or condition of the phenomenon that gives it a distinctive character” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 95).

Because phenomenological studies require understandings of philosophical assumptions and a deep understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013), I explored horizons which designated clusters of meaning through interviews, the online bulletin board focus group, and a hypothetical letter to teacher considering instructional coaching.

Transcribed data was analyzed using Saldana's (2013) mechanics of coding to track significant statements and assist in finding clusters of meaning to inform the study and aid horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). Participant's hypothetical letters were read at least three times for phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994) and significant statements from the written data were coded and analyzed for themes. Saldana's (2013) mechanics of coding assisted in data analysis as I extracted key phrases and organized significant statements through first cycle narrative coding. Utilizing findings from first cycle coding allowed me to identify preliminary codes and categories and develop themes relating to the research questions for this study. Saldana's (2013) first and second cycle coding allowed for horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994), a textual understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013), and deep reflection of emerging patterns and meanings of each participant's experience (Saldana, 2013).

The conclusion of the phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994) requires a synthesis of composite textual and structural descriptions to form the meaning and essence of teachers who transitioned from the role of classroom teacher to the role of instructional coach. Examining the experiences through textual language to continually, and methodically look at and describe multiple aspects of the individual's experiences allows for the development of the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). The process of Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological reduction begins with *epoche*, continues with a complete explication of the phenomenon through horizontalization to determine horizons and clusters of themes, and

concludes with organizing clusters and themes to develop the textural description of the experience to determine the meaning and essence of the phenomenon being studied.

Phenomenological reduction allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the everyday experiences and address what it was like for participants “to be, to have, or to live” (Saldana, 2013, p. 199).

### **Imaginative Variation**

The next step in the transcendental phenomenological research process includes utilizing imaginative variation to seek possible meanings for the phenomenon through imagination/various frames of reference and approaching the phenomenon from different perspectives to reach structural descriptions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). I formed a composite structural description of the phenomenon using imaginative variation to analyze varied possible meaning, list structural qualities to develop structural themes. Through the possible meanings, I attempted to discover the structural qualities of the transitional experiences of a classroom teacher turned instructional coach (Moustakas, 1994); circumstance, motivations, and influences that contributed to the phenomenon are all factors that impact the experiences of the participants. Imaginative variation utilizes phenomenological reduction to “derive structural themes from textual descriptions” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99) and provides the researcher multiple possibilities connected to the experiences of the individual, otherwise defined by Moustakas (1994) as the “‘how’ that speaks to the conditions that illuminate the ‘what’ of the experience” (p. 98).

### **Synthesis, Meanings, and Essences**

Synthesis of meanings and essences, the final step in transcendental phenomenological research includes integrating textural and structural descriptions to establish “a unified statement

of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100). Meaning units will be constructed by synthesizing significant statements to create themes. Meaning units will describe how the experience happened along with the setting and context of how the transition from teacher to coach was experienced. The essence of the phenomenon represents an underlying structure and will allow me to identify what it felt like to experience the phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 1989) based on participant data sources. The three processes (phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of meaning) in the conceptual framework of transcendental phenomenology allowed me to examine the experiences of an individual as they describe their experience with the phenomenon. The primary purpose of a qualitative phenomenological study is to describe and clarify the complex experiences of an individual (Polkinghorne, 2005). Saldana's (2013) mechanics of coding allowed me to find emerging codes through playing with the data by chunking paragraphs, highlighting, circling and/or underlining obvious codes in the transcribed interviews, online bulletin board focus group, and hypothetical letter to a teacher. The data was organized using a three column template which displays the data (chunked paragraphs), preliminary codes, and final codes (Saldana, 2013). Within the preliminary and final codes, similar codes will be grouped into categories, which in turn will provide emerging themes to inform the study and provide a construct for a written narrative of the findings.

Using transcendental phenomenology as design for this study is appropriate because it will attempt to describe the experiences of individuals transitioning from the classroom to become an instructional coach, what they experienced as they moved in and through the phenomenon, and what they will share with teachers considering the transition from classroom to instructional coach. Replication of the study is a possibility if it is employed as outlined above.

Data collection and analysis could help those desiring to replicate the study to identify themes that inform experiences within the phenomenon.

### **Trustworthiness**

Conducting a valid, qualitative study requires the researcher to establish trustworthiness (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This transcendental, phenomenological study ensures trustworthiness through establishing credibility, dependability and confirmability, and transferability. Credibility ensures the researcher used sufficient methods to support or refute conclusions and interpretations of the study (Creswell, 2013). Dependability ensures the methods for conducting the study and the processes used to gather and analyze data are trustworthy. Confirmability assumes the results of the study can be confirmed and are legitimate (Creswell, 2013). Transferability assumes the study can be conducted in a similar setting and reach similar conclusions (Creswell, 2013). Each of those factors listed previously are integral to supporting the validity of the findings of the study.

### **Credibility**

All data sources were used to determine various experiences of the transition from teacher to instructional coach, experiences within the transition, and how those experiences could assist a teacher considering a transition from the classroom to instructional coaching. Utilizing three forms of data will assist in describing the essence of the experience. After the Interviews and online bulletin board Online Focus Group have been transcribed, I will ask participants to member check to ensure credibility of the data. Involving all stakeholders to provide feedback and confirm or deny accuracy of information adds to the credibility of the analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Dependability and Confirmability**

Dependability in this study will include triangulation of data, because it “provides multiple data points to confirm findings or resolve discrepancies in the study” (Gall et al., 2014, p. 354). An awareness of my own feelings allows for open mindedness, minimal biases, and greater dependability in the study (Moustakas, 1994). Confirmability in this study can include member checks, but also peer auditing by an individual not directly connected to the study. I utilized a peer who recently obtained his doctorate in education to ensure the data to confirm credibility of my findings. I provided an electronic copy of my findings to my peer at least a month before finalizing data analysis findings for feedback and editing. Dependability and confirmability will be established through rich, thick descriptions of themes (Creswell, 2013), including participants to check/monitor data collection of transcribed interviews for accuracy, member checking of findings, researcher’s reflexive journal (see Appendix I) to assist with bracketing her own experiences (Moustakas, 1994), and peer reviewing.

### **Transferability**

Thick, rich descriptions of setting, data collected and coded, and assumptions of the research can allow “readers to make decisions about transferability” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All of the collected data and the findings will assist other scholars interested in this phenomenon. Transferability allows this study to be conducted in similar settings and could produce similar conclusions (Creswell, 2013); transferability of this study could be limited to only those institutions that employ instructional coaches. As I attempted to achieve maximum variation in the study, I increased transferability by choosing participants serving different school divisions, living in different areas of the country, and varying years as a classroom teacher prior to transitioning to instructional coach. Transferability of the research is directly impacted by the processes and audit trail (see Appendix M) to document the processes of

the research and the efforts to have all information reviewed. Ensuring and controlling the procedures during data collection and analysis safeguards the research and provides transferability for those considering the same type of study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations in this research study will include IRB approval, consent from sites and participants, privacy of the participants, and safety/confidentiality of the data. Consent for the study will be obtained using a consent form and participants will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time if they feel it is necessary (Creswell, 2013). Participant privacy will be protected through the use of pseudonyms for sites and individuals throughout the entire research process and at its conclusion. Participants will receive a transcribed copy of their interview and will be able to correct any incomplete thoughts or information to ensure credibility of the data. I will ensure interview data is protected by storing it on an external hard drive that is password protected.

Data will be kept safe through using protected passwords and storage on an external drive for a period of three years. Honesty in data collection, analysis, and reporting was reflected in member checks by participants. Participants will be able to obtain the results of the study if they so desired. Data will be destroyed using a shredder (written/paper) and deleted from the external hard drive three years after the study has been published.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to gain an understanding of why teachers transition from the role of teacher to the role of instructional coach. Chapter Three provided a plan and rationale for this transcendental phenomenological study used to conduct this study, beginning with IRB approval and ending with ethical considerations. In this chapter, I defined

sampling procedures for the site and participants, methods of data collection and analysis, and steps taken to ensure the study is credible and trustworthy. The chapter concluded with an outline of ethical considerations and how the researcher will protect the identities of the site and participants to safeguard the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### Overview

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of 13 teachers who transitioned from the classroom to become instructional coaches. Instructional coaches chosen for this study included group members from two online forums. Instructional coaches included in the study were located throughout the United States. In order to ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used to identify all teacher participants. Chapter Four was designed to provide detailed characterizations of each participant and discussions that were described throughout the data collection process. Common themes and narratives were examined and analyzed to elaborate on the participant's lived experiences as they transitioned from classroom teacher to instructional coach, what they experienced in their role as instructional coach, and what they would share with those teachers considering the same transition. Collecting, organizing, analyzing, and interpreting the data using Moustakas' (1994) model for transcendental phenomenology and coding using Saldana's (2013) process helped to provide thick, rich data, to inform the study, using participant experiences.

Chapter Four begins with a review of the research questions, followed by a narrative description of each participant. The chapter moves on to outline themes identified from the participants' experiences, organized by the research questions that guided the study. The study was designed to gain an understanding of the former classroom teachers' experiences as they transitioned from the classroom, to the role of instructional coach, and what they would share with those considering the same transition. The following sub questions guided the research:

1. What key motivational factors influence teachers to transition from the role of classroom teacher to instructional coach?

2. What practical knowledge do teachers acquire about instructional coaching and the role of instructional coach as they fully transition into the role?

3. What valuable advice or information would instructional coaches find significant to share with current classroom teachers who are considering the same transition?

### **Participants**

Current instructional coaches who have transitioned from the classroom to the role of instructional coach were used for this study. Instructional coach participants were selected after completing a screening survey determining if they were eligible to participate in the study based on five years or more teaching experience, prior to transitioning to the role of instructional coach. A purposeful sample of participants was generated because each of the participants currently serve as an instructional coach in a school or schools. There were 12 females and 1 male who participated in the study. Although only 11 participated in the online focus group and 10 composed a hypothetical letter to a teacher considering a transition from the classroom to the role of instructional coach, all 13 participated in an online, individual online interview to inform the data. Basic demographic information for each participant is listed in Table 1 in Chapter Three. The following sections include a narrative description of each of the participants, to include quotes, in order to accurately embody the participant's voices. All quotes from participants are presented verbatim, which includes verbal ticks and grammatical errors in speech and writing to more accurately depict participants' voices.

#### **Jane**

Jane currently works as an instructional coach in a public school system, but previously worked in a private school as a classroom teacher. Although she appreciated her time in the classroom she did feel some sense of burnout. Jane is currently experiencing more personal and

professional growth in her instructional coaching role.

She expressed “The burnout [classroom teaching] is real and the need to change and grow took over” (Jane, Online Focus Group 1 response to Lisa, 2019). Her principal encouraged her to transition from the classroom to the role of instructional coach and she is currently working on her doctorate in education. Jane taught for nine years and has been a coach for four years, she finds working with adults similar to working with children, the conversation is just different.

### **Martin**

Martin feels he has had a lot of solid educators in his life that have shaped who he is as an educator. He was unsure of his career path while attending a liberal arts college. He started his career in education in a highly economically disadvantaged school and truly enjoyed working with the students, but felt as hard as they may work to increase their skills and knowledge, they could never catch up to where they needed to be. He wanted to avoid the stigma, as a male, of falling into the “administrator trap” (Martin, Interview, 2019), and felt instructional coaching was the right transition for him because his school district was opening two new schools that would need instructional coaches. He knew the two schools would need support with curriculum and culture building because of the teachers they were moving and hiring. Although he initially struggled because there was not a clear understanding of his role as a coach, he appreciated that the two administrators allowed him to “make this [his role as instructional coach] what you need and what our staff needs” (Martin, Interview, 2019). Martin taught for eight years and has coached for two years.

### **Sally**

Sally fell in love with teaching elementary school when she was placed in a kindergarten classroom during her college music education program. Because of Sally’s leadership abilities

and her innovative lessons, she was used to provide professional development for the school she worked in and still remain a classroom teacher. She felt “stretched too thin” (Sally, Interview, 2019) when her school district changed her role from full time classroom teacher to part time instructional coach/part time classroom teacher. When she first transitioned into the role of full time instructional coach, she worried about missing her students and how her peers would react to her new role and the expectations in that role. Sally spent 14 years in the classroom and has been an instructional coach for 6 years.

### **Anne**

Anne was a teacher for 17 years before transitioning to her role of instructional coach. Anne truly enjoyed planning, decorating her classroom, forging relationships with her students, and curriculum planning. She started her career in education as an instructional aide, earned her teaching licensure, and has a degree in administration. One of the reasons she transitioned into the role of instructional coach was to support teachers. She shared her thoughts about the support teachers get:

I knew I wanted to support teachers. That was kind of a big thing. Like, I wanted to make sure that teachers have the support they need to because education was so ... (pause) it becomes so demanding. And the lack of support from the administrator that I had experienced was so pathetic that I did not want, I didn't want people to have to do that.

(Anne, Interview, 2016)

### **Helen**

Helen is in her 23rd year as an educator who originally thought she would be a college professor, but once she started teaching high school, she knew that public school was where she should be. She worried about the gaps in learning she saw in her years teaching high school and

struggled with that as an educator. In her experience, she felt that professional development was not really based on the needs of the teachers, it was based on district needs. In her role as instructional coach, she has learned that teachers, like students, need time to process and think. In her hypothetical letter to a teacher considering a transition to the role of instructional coach, she wants the classroom teacher to know her experience:

As with any career change, I know that moving from classroom teacher to instructional coach is not a decision that is taken lightly. For many years, I, too, was successful in the classroom. A lifelong learner, I challenging myself with new instructional strategies, weaving digital content and tools in my curricula, expanding my certifications, and earning National Boards. As these opportunities continued to grow my portfolio as a classroom teacher, I found myself informally sharing these strategies with peers and in PLCs. Recognizing the value in peer coaching, I looked for professional development in this area, seeking ways to learn more about this career path through books, workshops, and my educational network. When our district expressed a need for instructional coaches, I was ready - with training, experience, and ideas - to fill this need. Without a doubt, this move has been one of the best decisions of my career. (2019)

### **Sabrina**

Sabrina grew up in a small town, worked as a paraprofessional for a number of years, and then became a classroom teacher. She worked in low poverty schools where there were limited resources, which frustrated her because she loved her students and felt they did not have the resources they needed to help them succeed. Sabrina had a positive experience with the instructional coach in her building, who helped her become an example of a model classroom for math. She has a degree in administration and thought she would become a principal, but enjoyed

working with teachers in the classroom and helping them improve instruction. When asked what helps her succeed, Sabrina stated “Being opening to listen to them [teachers] and just being there to let them know that they’re not in it on their own” (Sabrina, Interview, 2019).

### **Betty**

Betty is in her second year in the role of instructional coach and spent nine years in the classroom. She began her career teaching first and second grade and was hesitant when moved to fourth grade, but learned to adjust and ended up truly enjoying the move in grade levels. Betty wanted a leadership role but did not want to move into administration, and felt that because she was a part time mentor teacher, the transition to instructional coach would be a good fit for her. In her hypothetical letter, she cautioned teachers considering the transition to:

Be prepared for a roller coaster of a first year, be able to wipe tears (yours and others), gain thicker skin, learn the power of a positive no, become a leader of your school, but most of all learn to love this new position. (Betty, Letter to Teacher, 2019)

Betty credits her growth in instructional coaching as learning how to read adults and growing thicker skin.

### **Nanette**

Nanette always knew she wanted to be an educator. She continually looks for “things to grow myself [herself] as an educator” (Nanette, Interview, 2019). She has an administration degree, was a classroom teacher for 15 years, and has been an instructional coach for 10 years. Nanette embraced the opportunity to become an instructional coach but felt frustrated when her peers no longer viewed her as peer when she became a coach. Nanette gives teachers considering the transition to instructional coach some advice and feedback on her experiences:

Coaching is a tough gig, but is also incredibly rewarding! Coaches are not “teachers” in the traditional sense and are not administration but have the best of both worlds. Coaches have the advantage of not only contributing to decisions but understanding the back-end of how and why those decisions are made. While I loved being a classroom teacher for 15 years I found I absolutely loved coaching and becoming a teacher-educator. Best of luck with your decision! (Nanette, Letter to Teacher, 2019)

### **Lisa**

Lisa began thinking she was not going to follow in the educator footsteps of those in her family and originally wanted to be a supreme court justice. She taught for nine years before entering the role of instructional coach. Lisa felt burnt out and she struggled with “giving my [her] all in the classroom and coming home and being 100 percent for my family” (Lisa, Online Focus Group 1, 2019). She holds a masters degree in Instructional Technology Coaching and once she became a coach, she found it was a rewarding switch. Lisa enjoys reflecting with teachers and connecting with other coaches in her personal learning network both online and in person. She uses her own experiences as a teacher to help build relationships and rapport with teachers. In her transition to coaching she has learned that teachers, like students, don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care (Lisa, Interview, 2019).

### **Tina**

Tina spent the first 15 years of her career as a classroom teacher and she is currently in her first year of instructional coaching. She credits having a positive relationship with an instructional coach and her own experience in the classroom with her success coaching other teachers. Her decision to transition from the classroom to the role of instructional coach was internally motivated because she “had been teaching for 15 years and knew that I [she] needed a

change. I lost my sparkle. I loved the kids, but I think that I got so remote in how I taught that it didn't challenge me" (Tina, Online Focus Group 1, 2019). Tina had a great relationship with one of her administrators and when she was moved to another school, the new administrator's vision for the school frustrated Tina, as she was more focused on the school being in the spotlight and less focused on growth. She was encouraged by a principal to apply to become an instructional coach and made the transition but wondered if she would miss her students, or if her peers would treat her differently in her new role.

### **Bianca**

Bianca did not grow up thinking she would be a teacher, but she holds a degree in Business Education and is certified English Language Arts. She found middle school a challenge to teach and struggled when she lost most of her technology capability as she moved from a business education teacher to an language arts teacher. She found success in the classroom realizing "it is ok to fail and it's ok for your students to realize that you do not know everything" (Bianca, Interview, March 6, 2019). She served as a teacher leader for her school and felt the move from the classroom to instructional coaching was the right choice because her "heart for helping others exceeded my [her] ability to manage classroom instruction and teacher leadership" (Bianca, Online Focus Group, 2019). Some of the struggles she faces in her current role as instructional coach is making time for she feels needs to be done, switching gears during her day, and attempting to be more present in classrooms to observe and assist teachers. Her goal as an instructional coach is to help teachers feel confident and know they are capable of creating and executing engaging lessons to impact student learning.

### **Marjorie**

Marjorie would play school in her basement as a child and was encouraged by her father to pursue a math and science background in college. She has a dual degree in math and elementary education. Because of her math background, she found joy in trying to figure out why a child struggled with math concepts in her classroom. Marjorie shared she struggled, internally with the direction and vision administration or the district had versus what direction she thought they should be going to impact learning and instruction. Marjorie decided to transition from the classroom to instructional coaching because although she had taught long enough to retire, she was not ready to leave education and an opportunity to coach with a non-profit organization, and serve schools presented itself to her. As an instructional coach, serving multiple school districts, Marjorie found successes and challenges in her new role and shared, “success was seeing many teachers move from more teacher directed teaching to more student centered learning in many classrooms. A challenge is the teachers who are resistant to change” (Marjorie, Online Focus Group, 2019). If a teacher were to consider the same transition Marjorie made, she suggests the individual understands they need to know how to develop relationships, to come across as credible, and be themselves. Marjorie was a classroom teacher for 31 years and has been an instructional coach for two years.

### **Veronica**

Veronica graduated with a degree in business management, but was persuaded by a principal who believed she would make a great teacher. She held a temporary certification in teaching until she finished the required courses needed to become fully certified. She earned a certificate in administration prior to having children. Veronica had no experience student teaching and regardless of the lack of experience, she was always encouraged to seek leadership positions. She has been in the same school district throughout her career in education and feels

the district likes to grow from within as she moved from classroom teacher, instructional coach, to district level instructional coach. As a classroom teacher, Veronica felt supported by leadership and enjoyed her school community, but struggled with commonality in planning and core teachers' professional learning communities because she was a specialized CTE teacher. Veronica was a classroom teacher for seven years and has been an instructional coach for six years. She defines her successes as an instructional coach:

I feel as though I am now a more rounded educational leader. Personally, I have been put in the position to see the education system as a whole, not just the walls of my classroom or even the department. This, is probably my biggest takeaway. Working with staff and enabling them with instructional resources and guidance has also been awesome.

Helping people grow! (Veronica, Online Focus Group, 2019)

This section was designed to provide background information about participants in the study. Participants shared candid information about their transition from the classroom to instructional coaching, what they experienced in the role, and what they would share with others considering the same transition. The above snapshots of participants assisted in gaining a better understanding of their experiences and contributed to the essence of the phenomenon.

## **Results**

Analyzing Interviews, the online bulletin board focus group discussion, and hypothetical letter to a teacher considering a transition to instructional coach provided the results for this study. The use of a data analysis coding template (see Appendix N) allowed for data layout and coding cycles. Cycles of coding provided identification of themes to inform the study. These themes and answers to the research questions provide the essence of the phenomenon of what former classroom teachers experienced when they transitioned from the classroom to the role of

instructional coach. As I sought themes and saturated the data, I bracketed personal experiences and thoughts (see Appendix L) about the phenomenon and analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) method for qualitative analysis. After phenomenological reduction and data analysis coding using textural and structural descriptions, four themes emerged from the research: (a) need for change; (b) call to support teachers; (c) transitions are difficult but rewarding; (d) and relationships matter.

### **Theme Development**

Theme development and phenomenological data analysis are interchangeable because the purpose of this analysis is to develop the essence of the phenomenon through the textural and structural descriptions of participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Themes were a result of the analysis process and they described the essence of the participants' experiences. The essence of the phenomenon of teachers' experience transitioning from the role of classroom teacher to instructional coach was established through Saldana's (2013) coding process. First cycle narrative coding provided the opportunity to read and re-read Interview transcriptions, online bulletin board focus group discussions, and hypothetical letters to teacher to identify significant statements. Statements were analyzed, horizontalized and deemed significant if they were considered essential to the experience rather than incidental (Saldana, 2013).

Second cycle coding allowed for key phrases to be identified clustered and refined through phenomenological reduction utilizing the significant statements, which helped to create preliminary codes. Qualitative codes are "essence-capturing and essential elements of the research story" (Saldana, 2013, p. 9) that assist in developing categories and provide an analysis of connections between textural thoughts and emerging concepts. Imaginative variation was also employed through second cycle coding to provide the researcher multiple possibilities connected

to the experiences of the individual, to define the “‘how’ that speaks to the conditions that illuminate the ‘what’ of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98).

Preliminary codes were then divided into categories to develop themes to gain a deep understanding of the meaning of participants’ lived experiences (Saldana, 2013). Through the use of Saldana’s (2013) coding process, and synthesis of meanings and essences using the framework for a transcendental phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994), four major themes emerged as the essence of the phenomenon. The essence is presented through the following four themes: (a) need for change; (b) call to support teachers; (c) transition is difficult but rewarding; (d) relationships matter. Tables 2 through 5, preceding discussions of themes and subthemes, provide a visual regarding subthemes and emerging themes for this study and participants who shared experiences regarding the subthemes and themes.

**Theme one: Need for change.** The first theme that emerged from the data to describe what and how the participants experienced their transition from classroom teacher to the role of instructional coach was a need for change. Table two provides a visual depiction of aspects within the theme need for change and participants who identified with those aspects in data collected. During interviews, the online bulletin board discussion group, and through reflections in a hypothetical letter to teachers, data supported participants’ needs to not only change their role, but also to affect changes in instruction that directly impacts the success of teachers, students, and schools. Participants shared not only their need for change, but also the successes and challenges within the need to change. Upon analyzing all data many of the participants responded with different aspects of needing change and what they experienced as they transitioned from the classroom to instructional coaching.

Table 2

*Emerging Aspects in Theme One: Need for Change*

Participant	Outside Looking In	Frustration and Burnout	Encouragement from Administration	Struggled with Change	Seeing the Bigger Picture
Marjorie	x	x			
Bianca	x				
Veronica	x	x	x	x	x
Martin	x	x	x	x	x
Jane	x	x	x		
Lisa	x	x		x	x
Anne	x		x		
Helen	x		x	x	
Betty			x	x	
Sally	x	x		x	x
Sabrina		x			x
Tina		x		x	
Nanette	x	x	x	x	x

***Outside looking in.*** Bianca, Anne, Helen, and Veronica all felt a need to work with adults rather than students and sought a transition from the four walls of a classroom to what goes on as you look into those four walls. Helen reflected that she felt a “tug to leave the classroom to reach more scholars by supporting adult learners” (Online Focus Group 1, 2019). Anne admitted that she too felt the need to be out of the classroom and support adults because she was tired of “reading teacher manuals, changing bulletin boards, and answering relentless emails from

parents” (Online Focus Group 1, 2019). Anne also noted she really enjoyed curriculum development and planning versus the lack of time to plan and collaborate, and lack of support from administration. She felt making a change from the outside of the classroom could positively affect what went on inside the classroom. In their interviews, Sally, Nanette, Martin, and Anne all felt that professional development in their district needed to change to support the individual needs of teachers, based on their own frustrations, and felt that changing roles could positively affect that and impact what went on in classrooms. Throughout the online bulletin board discussion group, participants reflected upon their need to see changes in instruction that affects a school or teacher growth and the challenges in seeking that change. Veronica shared her thoughts about change,

I think when you are confined to your classroom, you assume (or at least I did) that everyone operates the same way you do, utilizing all instructional minutes, building relationships with students, etc. I now know this is not the case everywhere. At the building level, I didn't always understand why district level decisions were made and would advocate for the students and staff in my building. (Online Focus Group 3, 2019)

Nanette, Anne, Martin, and Bianca reflected upon similar experiences with affecting changes in instruction and schools and how viewing it from the outside looking in was eye opening. Bianca and Anne specifically noted that although they sought to improve teacher instruction and change how instructional practices are implemented, some teachers are just not willing to accept change (Online Focus Group 3, 2019).

***Frustration and burnout.*** Lisa, Veronica, Martin, and Jane all expressed they were frustrated/burnt out and were ready for a change. Jane reflected in the online bulletin board discussion group that she was ready for the change because, “the burnout is real and the need to

change took over” (Online Focus Group 1 response to Lisa, 2019). In her hypothetical letter to a teacher considering a transition to instructional coaching, Lisa shared that she felt burnt out both personally and professionally because she spent so much time preparing for instruction, serving her students, and after school would go home to her own children feeling burnt out. She felt she needed to change paths because she was coming home overwhelmed, which affected her personal life. Tina expressed frustration in keeping up with everything a teacher was expected to do and watching students who struggled both in and outside of schools led to her need to change (Interview, 2019). Both Sabrina and Sally expressed they felt a need to change because as a teacher they struggled to meet the diverse needs of their students, not only because of the time it took to plan and support those students, but because of the lack of resources to support those diverse students. In her interview, Sabrina shared her frustrations with a lack of tangible and intangible resources and feeling the need to change that aspect for her peers by seeking a change in roles (2019). Sabrina holds additional degrees in an area her district struggles with and felt the change would positively affect her district.

***Encouragement from administration.*** Some participants felt it was time for a change because administrators had encouraged them to seek change in a role they would allow them to grow and utilize the advanced educational skills to move teachers in a positive direction and provide onsite professional development for those teachers. Five of the participants hold advanced degrees in administration. Those participants holding administrative degrees did not pursue the transition to this point because they did not feel the role would allow them to mentor and truly shape change in schools, have experienced both positive and negative interactions with administrators, and felt the role was not a fit for them. When seeking a change, Martin felt that strong male educators often seek the path of administration, but he did not feel the same need,

rather, he “enjoyed working with developing curriculum, learning new programs, and brainstorming innovative ways to help grow students” (Letter to Teacher, 2019). Veronica, although she holds a degree in administration, was approached with the opportunity to change roles and she felt it was the right change to make (Online Focus Group 1, 2019). Jane was looking for a change and because she had presented many different topics to support teacher development, Jane’s administrator asked her to consider changing roles from the classroom teacher to instructional coach (Online Focus Group, 2019). Anne shared that administrators had motivated her to obtain her administrative degree and although they may have seen her in an administrative role, she had the “intention of finding methods to best support teachers” (Online Focus Group 5, 2019) through a change in roles. Martin felt that someone asking you to take on the role of instructional coach makes the decision easier (Online Focus Group 1, 2019).

*Struggled with change.* Although participants sought the need for change, they struggled with their role change. Many expressed they did not have a clear vision of what the change would mean in different schools and classrooms. Several participants struggled with the need to change because their peers would reject their help or view them differently. Nanette shared her struggle with changing roles and the transition to coaching, “When I came out of the classroom I didn’t expect that there would be so much resistance toward a fellow colleague, just because I wasn’t in front of kids anymore” (Online Focus Group 3, 2019). Helen, Lisa, and Veronica shared similar reflections. Helen was specifically worried about making the change, how she would work with veteran teachers who thought they knew everything already, and teachers who would think she was criticizing them rather than collaborating with them (Interview, 2019).

Participants also struggled with the change because there was not an instruction manual or pacing guide to what was expected as they made the change. Nanette, Betty, Martin, Anne,

and Veronica all expressed their frustrations with what was expected of them as they changed roles in their hypothetical letter to a teacher. Through the need to change many participants experienced both fear and frustration based on what teachers expected of them, what their defined role was in a school, and what administration expected from them. In his interview, Martin shared his fears that although he needed and wanted to transition to the role of instructional coach, there was no set curriculum on how to be a coach and that his new role was up to him to figure out what he and the staff may need from the role (Interview, 2019).

*Seeing the bigger picture.* Throughout data collection and analysis, participants shared their experiences with the need to change and how it gave them a holistic view of schools. Lisa shared the change allowed her to see things from a different perspective:

Instead of just viewing education from the teacher perspective, I began to have an opportunity to see education from a wealth of other perspectives. I talk to lots of different people. Administrators, principals, district level leaders, etc. all communicate with me, so I get to see education from a more holistic perspective. That does change things (Online Focus Group 3, 2019),

Veronica, Nanette, (Online Focus Group 3) and Martin (Interview) also shared they were able to hear conversations that they would not have as a teacher and that it gave them a better understanding of decision making and how systems work or attempt to make changes. Nanette specifically noted that changing roles allowed her to “remind myself [herself] that there are several cogs in the system of education that make schools and students successful – not just the one person that stands in front of them” (Online Focus Group 5, 2019). In the online bulletin board discussion (3), Veronica noted that seeing the education system as whole, rather than just within the four walls of her classroom was one of her biggest takeaways of changing roles.

Participants were able to see change and the need for changes from the outside looking in, as well as the the holistic view of the inner workings of schools as they transitioned from classroom teacher to instructional coach.

Table 3

*Emerging Aspects in Theme Two: Call to Support Teachers*

Participant	Teacher Growth and Professional Development	Guiding Adult Learners
Marjorie	x	
Bianca	x	x
Veronica	x	x
Martin	x	x
Jane	x	x
Lisa	x	
Anne	x	x
Helen	x	x
Betty	x	
Sally	x	
Sabrina	x	x
Tina	x	
Nanette	x	x

**Theme two: Call to support teachers.** The second theme that emerged from the data to describe what and how the participants experienced their transition from classroom teacher to the role of instructional coach was a call to support teachers. Table 3 provides a visual depiction of

aspects within the theme call to support teachers and participants who identified with those aspects in data collected. During interviews, the online bulletin board discussion group, and through reflections in a hypothetical letter to teachers, data supported participants' wants to support teachers in their classrooms and assist in professional growth. Upon analyzing all data many of the participants responded with different aspects of how they wanted to support teachers and how they actually experienced supporting teachers in their role.

***Teacher growth and professional development.*** As participants reflected throughout interviews, the online bulletin board discussions, and the hypothetical letter to a teacher, they noted a need to support teacher growth. Participants also experienced their own growth as they worked with teachers, as they realized some of the changes they would make in their own classroom should they return and how they recognized the importance of listening closely and reflecting to change mindsets. Not only did participants voice their need to support teacher growth, but also to support individualized professional development needs. Participants shared their role as teacher and their own needs in the classroom often reflected what they provided to teachers in their new role as instructional coach. Martin (Online Focus Group 5, 2019) and Jane (Interview, 2019) specifically noted that their new roles in supporting teacher growth and professional development was a result of the support they never received as a teacher.

Veronica, Bianca, Martin, and Betty all expressed the rewards of collaborating with teachers to help them grow as educators. Jane shared changing roles was rewarding to her because as she worked with teachers to help them change classroom practices, she saw growth in both the teachers she worked with and herself (Interview, 2019). Participants noted part of the process of helping a teacher grow required reflection. Lisa noted the rewards of helping a teacher reflect upon their practices to improve student learning outcomes (Online Focus Group 4,

2019). Like Lisa, Majorie also found success in her role when she could assist teachers to reflect upon changing instructional practices to meet the needs of students in their classrooms (Interview, 2019). In her hypothetical letter to a teacher considering a transition to instructional coach, Anne describes the rewards of supporting teacher growth:

You know those lightbulb moments when your students finally get it, and that feeling of pride and success you feel for them and the accomplishment you feel for yourself? That same feeling happens when you have a teacher that finally “gets it,” who feels confident enough to stretch beyond their comfort zone to improve their practice, or who feels vulnerable to ask you to observe their craft and give feedback. (2019)

Although participants felt the rewards of supporting teacher growth, they shared that sometimes they did not know what teachers needed. Martin, Lisa, Veronica, and Anne all shared they sometimes struggled with knowing what teachers needed to support growth. Martin noted that although he may not have known specific teacher needs, he looked for “opportunities to help and support teachers without getting too much into their business” (Online Focus Group 3, 2019). Similarly, Sally noted the importance of making sure you know what a teacher needs and what is relevant to them, because if you do not, anything you try to work on with them will “flop” (Interview, 2019).

Participants also shared the need to support teacher professional development needs. Betty felt success in supporting teachers by providing them professional development that helped them work towards a common goal (Online Focus Group 3, 2019). In her role as an instructional coach, Marjorie shared her impact on professional development in the schools she worked in and the rewards of knowing she supported teachers/schools that needed to show growth in math (Letter, 2019). Participants realized the skills and strategies they used in their own classroom

could directly impact individual teachers professional development needs throughout discussions in data collection. Tina shared working with a reading coach in her school division has helped provide meaningful professional development to support teachers in the buildings she works in and she reflected she wants to continue to “have meaningful PD that catches on” (Interview, 2019). Reflecting on their own experiences in the classroom impacted some participants and why they felt professional development was important to provide teachers as an instructional coach. In their interviews, Sally, Jane, and Helen shared their frustrations with professional development as a teacher and how it was never focused on teacher needs. All three former classroom teachers sought to work with teacher needs for professional development through their role as instructional coach.

***Guiding adult learners.*** Participants shared that although they wanted to support teachers, for some it was difficult to switch gears from working with children to working with adults. Anne, Helen, Jane, and Martin all expressed the difficulties of working with adults versus students. Jane specifically reflected “just because you can teach and grow students, does not mean you can do the same with adults” (Online Focus Group 4, 2019). Participants also noted the disillusionment they experienced as they tried to support adults and work to help them grow. Betty specifically noted she had to overcome her bias that not all teachers work and learn the same, just like the students she taught (Online Focus Group 5, 2019). In her interview, Sabrina shared supporting adults is different because as you switch roles, you need to become their support, not a facilitator. Lisa reflected that she often felt frustrated when she noticed teachers who did not care about instruction and student learning like she did and often would have to hide her emotions to avoid conflict (Online Focus Group 5, 2019). Helen mentioned that working with adults is similar to working with kids, but as you change roles, an instructional

coach needs to be aware that a veteran teacher will need time to “unpack before they can see the need to change” (Interview, 2019).

Although adult learning can be a difficult adjustment when switching roles, participants also reflected it was rewarding to work with adults because it enabled them to see both teacher and student growth. Bianca noted that although adult learners bring different challenges to the table, but the end results are rewarding (Letter, 2019). Veronica shared that although it was hard to see deficits in some of the teachers she used to collaborate with in her own classroom, working with them in different role became easier as she started to recognize how they learn (Interview, 2019). Both Helen and Nanette reflected upon the importance of ensuring adult learning is personalized for it to be effective (Online Focus Group 5, 2019). As they reflected, participants recognized the need to address adult learners at their level, which varied from how they may have addressed student learners when they were a classroom teacher.

**Theme three: Transitions are difficult but rewarding.** The third theme that emerged from the data to describe what and how the participants experienced their transition from classroom teacher to the role of instructional coach was transitions are difficult but rewarding. Table four provides a visual depiction of aspects within the theme transitions are difficult and participants who identified with those aspects in data collected. During interviews, the online bulletin board discussion group, and through reflections in a hypothetical letter to teachers, data supported participants’ experiences as they transitioned into their new role and how it affected them personally and professionally. Participants shared not only the difficulties as they transitioned and experienced challenges in a new role, but also the rewards of transitioning. Upon analyzing all data many of the participants responded with different aspects of why the transition was difficult but also rewarding.

Table 4

*Emerging Aspects in Theme Three: Transitions are Difficult but Rewarding*

Participant	Lack of Knowing Their Role	Loneliness and Isolation	Lack of Respect or Understanding from Peers	Reaping the Rewards
Marjorie	x	x		x
Bianca	x		x	
Veronica	x	x		x
Martin	x	x		
Jane			x	x
Lisa	x	x	x	x
Anne	x	x		x
Helen			x	
Betty	x		x	x
Sabrina	x			x
Tina	x			
Nanette	x	x	x	x

***Lack of knowing their role.*** Participants in the study shared that often times they were unsure of what their role was or what the expectations were as they transitioned and established their role. In their interviews, Betty, Nanette, Martin, Anne, and Sally all expressed fear and frustration with a lack of understanding what their role in a school would be when they first transitioned to the role of coach. Sally shared she felt

excitement and confusion supporting five sites. I could leverage the relationships, but their was no direction from the superintendent (my supervisor. I had autonomy, but worried about not doing enough, there was anxiety of what my role is – we kind of built the plane as we are flying. (Interview, 2019)

Veronica and Anne shared their challenges transitioning and how their role in different buildings or sites varied. Many participants collectively reflected upon their role as a teacher and the set expectations in that role, whereas in their new role as instructional coach, there was not a pacing guide or curriculum guide for instructional coaching. Veronica shared her initial experience with the transition and noted how hard it was and how she always felt she was fixing problems, but with time she began to work proactively rather than reactively by organizing her time and prioritizing what needed to be worked on (Online Focus Group 4, 2019).

Many of the participants shared the difficulties of changing roles in the same school they previously taught in. Tina, Nanette, and Veronica expressed the challenge of changing roles in the same school in the online bulletin board focus group. Nanette shared she was not “expecting views about me [her] to change, but with a new role came new mindsets” (Online Focus Group 2, 2019). Because of her previous role as an interventionist, Betty had to redefine her role when she transitioned. She reflected upon the frustrations she first felt with the transitions because administration had not explained her new role to staff and teachers. Teachers wanted her to continue pulling students for remediation and support them in that manner, rather than mentor and support teachers (Interview, 2019).

Anne described the initial transition to instructional coach as “grasping at wet noodles” in both her interview and letter to a teacher. She was unsure of what she should be doing with teachers and her role in the schools she served. Lisa expressed fear and frustration specifically coaching math and science teachers when she first transitioned because she did not have content knowledge in those areas. In her letter to a teacher, she shared math and science teachers would see through her if she pretended to know the content. To compensate for lack of knowledge in

those areas, Lisa vowed to make sure they knew “the teacher is almost always the content expert, and I am just their to help him or her along the way” (Letter, 2019).

***Loneliness and isolation.*** Participants remarked and reflected upon the loneliness they felt not only as they transitioned, but as they continued in the role of instructional coach. Anne, Veronica, and Lisa all felt isolation and loneliness when they first transitioned and expressed that in their interviews. Nanette shared that overcoming loneliness was a challenge because she was no longer on a team as a classroom teacher, she was now an instructional coach with no one to bounce ideas off of or share successes and challenges with (Online Focus Group 4, 2019). Anne struggled with her new identity as she transitioned, she “felt lonely and without a home” (Online Focus Group 2, 2019). In her letter to a teacher considering a transition to instructional coach (2019), Marjorie reflected upon the loneliness of coaching and suggested social networks as a strategy to overcome the sense of loneliness she felt when making the initial transition. Lisa shared similar thoughts about overcoming the loneliness of being the only person in the building with no one to talk to by finding professional learning networks online or through neighboring districts (Online Focus Group 4, 2019). In his interview, Martin shared overcoming loneliness requires a new instructional coach to be in classrooms, rather than sitting in an office completing desk work (Interview, 2019). Nanette cautions teachers considering a transition to develop thick skin because “as your relationships change, you may or feel as if you are being left out. This isn’t you, it’s your role” (Letter, 2019).

***Lack of respect or understanding from peers.*** Participants shared their fears and frustrations with how their peers perceived them when they first transitioned into the role of instructional coach. As previously noted, Betty’s peers struggled to view her new role differently when she transitioned to instructional coach. Nanette remarked that as she

transitioned and became more comfortable in her role, she would remind her peers that she was a former teacher and had faced the same struggles and challenges they did when they assumed she would not understand because of her new role (Letter, 2019). Through the initial transition, Helen worried about judgement from peers and how she could change their mindset from perceiving her as thinking she was better than them to viewing her as a “collaborative problem solver” (Interview, 2019). Martin, Jane, and Nanette all cautioned teachers who are considering a transition to coaching to have thicker skin and to not take things personally. Jane also cautions newer coaches to prepare for backlash from peers and to allow them space and time to understand what your role is (Online Focus Group 4, 2019). In her letter to a teacher, Lisa remarked on her own experience and cautioned that teachers may fear you as an instructional coach because they do not want to be judged (Letter, 2019). In Nanette’s interview, she candidly shared her frustrations with peer perceptions of her role as an instructional coach:

When I became a coach, it changed. It was no longer, hey Nanette, come on in, Show me you know how to do this. It was more like, nope, don’t need your help. Thanks. Weird. It was like, you know, the world has shifted. Um, people saw me differently then, you know, so, so , that was an adjustment. (2019)

The fear and frustration of the transition and how it affected peer perceptions of their new role was a notable theme throughout data analysis. Throughout data collection and discussions, participants shared they cared about what their peers thought of them, but it did not change how they felt about the decision to transition.

***Reaping the rewards.*** Although transitioning from the classroom to the role of instructional coach was a difficult transition for participants, throughout data analyzed, many reflected that it was also rewarding. In their letters to a teacher considering a transition to

coaching, Betty, Veronica, Lisa, Marjorie, Anne, and Jane all shared the transition, although there were some challenging times, was a rewarding career move. Betty and Marjorie both felt rewarded by their role when they witnessed the impact their coaching had on changing teacher mindsets or instructional practices (Letters, 2019). Sabrina felt rewarded when working with teachers and assisting them with what they felt was relevant (Interview, 2019). Lisa found the transition rewarding because she enjoyed helping teachers reflect and search for new instructional practices with her (Online Focus Group 1, 2019). Nanette felt the most reward as a coach when she could share her knowledge of technology to help teachers find new ways to support instruction and impact student learning (Interview, 2019). Helen shared instructional coaches “no matter how small, we do make a difference- and, if we pay attention, we make ripples” (Online Focus Group 4, 2019).

**Theme four: Relationships matter.** The fourth theme that emerged from the data to describe what and how the participants experienced their transition from classroom teacher to the role of instructional coach was the importance of relationships. Table five provides a visual depiction of aspects within the theme relationships matter and participants who identified with those aspects in data collected. During interviews, the online bulletin board discussion group, and through reflections in a hypothetical letter to teachers, data supported participants’ views about relationships in their transition and their role as an instructional coach. Participants continually shared the importance of relationships and their impact on their role as instructional coach. Many participants shared their role as a coach is dependent upon the relationships they build in their role. Additionally, many participants shared relationships changed when they transitioned from the classroom to the role of instructional coach.

Table 5

*Emerging Aspects in Theme Four: Relationships Matter*

Participant Name	Relationships Change	Relationships Building as a Foundation
Marjorie		x
Bianca		x
Veronica	x	
Martin	x	x
Jane		x
Lisa		x
Anne	x	x
Helen	x	x
Betty	x	x
Sally		x
Sabrina		x
Tina	x	x
Nanette	x	x

***Relationships change.*** Participants shared when they transitioned from the classroom to the role of instructional coach, it changed the dynamics of their relationships with peers. Throughout discussions, teacher perceptions of the newly appointed coach were often negative. Participants shared teachers often feared collaborating with them because they felt the instructional coach would be evaluative and share information with administration. Nanette and Anne shared that teacher mindsets changed once they left the classroom because teachers felt

they had gone to the “dark side” (Anne, Online Focus Group 5 response to Nanette, 2019).

Participants who changed roles in the same building experienced more negativity from teachers in their building because of a lack of understanding of the newly appointed coaching role.

Veronica, in her letter to a teacher considering a transition, shared her experience:

I was working in the same building as I was a classroom teacher, however, my role had changed. I found it very difficult to maintain professional relationships with staff members who had once shared my frustrations and been my friend. I worked very hard to find a balance. (2019)

Participants were generally aware that peer perceptions would change based on their new role, shared how it made them feel and how they could help change the negative stigmas. In her letter to a teacher considering a transition to instructional coach, Nanette vividly reflected:

When I moved into the role of a coach, some viewed me as someone who was looking to ‘fix’ their teaching style and the questions tapered off. Be prepared for grade-level colleagues to pull back from their interaction with you. It’s not that they don’t still want to collaborate with you but now you are no longer in the same role with the same day-to-day goals so that may change how often you communicate. (2019)

Helen and Tina both recognized their peers would most likely view them in a different manner

but expressed they tried to build trust through collaboration and clarifying what their role is.

Participants were generally aware there would be a change in how their peers viewed them when they transitioned roles and were reflective and candid when sharing their feelings about the change.

***Relationship building is a foundation.*** In every letter written to a teacher considering a transition to instructional coach, participants stressed the importance of building relationships.

As participants shared the importance of building relationships, they also remarked on how trust needed to be built. Anne reflected on the importance of trust in the online bulletin board discussion group and shared

Making changes in a system, within a site, and/or with a teacher takes momentous effort – much like turning the Titanic. And it is impossible to do this without developing relationships build on trust. . .and establishing these relationships also takes a lot of time (Online Focus Group 3, 2019),

Relationship building was a common theme throughout all data sources. Martin, Tina, Nanette, and Helen all referred to the importance of relationship building and how it impacts the role of instructional coach. Tina shared the importance of establishing relationships using simple tactics like reading to a teacher’s class for 20 minutes to give them a break or leaving candy in your office to coerce teachers to come to you, rather than you going to them (Online Focus Group 4, 2019). Participants shared the challenges of establishing relationships, but continually stated the importance of relationships in their role.

### **Research Question Responses**

The central research question was: What are the experiences of teachers who transitioned from the role of classroom teacher to instructional coach? Classroom teachers who transitioned from their role in the classroom to the role of instructional coach and the reflections they shared throughout Interviews, the online bulletin board focus group, and hypothetical letter to a teacher considering a transition to instructional coaching indicated themes of: (a) a need to change; (b) a call to support teachers; (c) the transition is difficult but rewarding; and (d) relationships matter. Although individuals had their own significant experiences making the transition from classroom

teacher to instructional coach, their overall experiences were revealed and directly related to the four themes developed through data analysis and saturation.

Participants candidly shared they desired a change from classroom teacher to instructional coaching because it would provide them an opportunity to collaborate with teachers from the outside looking in. The transition also allowed them to work with adults rather than with children, in a different capacity. In her letter to a teacher, Helen shared it was the best decision she had made because instructional coaching allowed her to share what she had learned as a classroom teacher with other teachers (Letter, 2019). Participants reflected upon the fact that in their role as instructional coach, they had the best of both worlds through watching teachers grow and also how that growth transforms a classroom. Many participants who had served as teacher leaders or mentors, in addition to their classroom teaching duties before becoming an instructional coach felt the change to support teachers was a natural progression. Betty was “eager to take the time and energy I was already devoting to helping others to the next level” (Online Focus Group 1, 2019).

Participants noted they wanted to share their passion for teaching in a different capacity and therefore needed to make that change from the classroom to coaching. The role of classroom teacher became stagnant to participants and 11 of the participants in the first online bulletin board focus group shared they felt stuck in their role as classroom teacher and were ready for a new role. Eight of the participants shared they were either approached to make the change by administration or central office because of their experiences in the classroom and their ability to lead teachers. Participants shared their frustrations and fears making the transition to coaching, but noted the rewards of making the transition. Fears within the transition including

not knowing what their role was or how they fit in, in addition to the frustration of peer understanding of a new role.

Eight of the ten participants who wrote letters to teachers considering the transition to coaching remarked it is a rewarding transition to move from the classroom to coaching. Jane specifically noted “this will be one of the most impactful and rewarding opportunities in your career. Your impact will be valued for years to come and the support you provide will be pertinent to the success of our future” (Letter, 2019). Despite the challenges of making the transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach, participants felt the rewards of making the change and how it helped them support teacher growth and impact student learning. Although relationships may change and morph through time during the integration into the role of instructional coach, all participants recognized that relationships matter as they developed their role. Anne specifically reflected the upside to her role as coach was developing relationships and how similar it was to “turning the Titanic” (Online Focus Group 2, 2019). The theme that relationships matter carried through the entrance into the role and continued as all instructional coaches established their roles. Bianca stressed the need for establishing relationships and although it may be hard, some teachers need the relationship to understand they need support or to change their instruction (Online Focus Group 3, in response to Lisa, 2019). Participants shared the importance of establishing and making sure relationships continue to grow as a vital aspect of their success in instructional coaching.

**Sub-question 1.** Sub question one was: What key motivational factors influence teachers to transition from the role of classroom teacher to instructional coach? Many of the participants voiced what they felt contributed to making the decision to transition from the classroom to instructional coaching and emerged as the two themes for this sub question are: a need to change

and a call to support teachers. Participants used the words or phrases ready to move, change, ready for something new, change roles throughout the online bulletin board discussion groups to define their experiences transitioning from classroom teacher to instructional coach. Additionally, participants used the words/phrases support, growth, collaboration, teacher growth, teacher support, mentor, teacher leader, when discussing their transition and how it impacted their decision.

When reflecting upon why she made the move to instructional coach, Tina specifically shared she had lost her sparkle and wanted to see beyond her “bubble of a classroom” (Online Focus Group 1, 2019). Burn out and mental/emotional exhaustion contributed to why Jane, Bianca, and Lisa were motivated to make a transition. Lisa and Sally candidly shared they knew making the transition was what they needed because when they came home from a day in the classroom they felt overwhelmed coming home to their own children. Instructional coaching allowed Lisa and Sally a different, less exhausting role in education without leaving education. Several participants were looking to transition to a leadership role that did not mean administration, although they hold advanced degrees in administration. Nanette specifically noted in her interview although she holds an advanced degree in administration, she worked to make sure she would move up and thought she may move into administration, but after realizing her passion was working with teachers and helping them with technology, she knew administration was not for her (Interview, 2019).

Although participants expressed a need for change as a motivational factor, they also expressed a call to support teachers. Many of the participants served as teacher leaders, mentors, or specialists and those roles were catalysts for making the transition from the classroom to instructional coaching. Participants wanted to use their instructional and leadership skills to

support teachers, and see their growth and student growth from a different view. Martin, Jane, Anne, Helen, Lisa, and Tina all commented on using their skills and content/curriculum knowledge, and their need to share those to support teachers as motivational factors for transitioning out of the classroom. Several participants felt a need to transition to provide individualized professional development because it was not offered to them when they were in the classroom, and they wanted to support teacher's individual needs. Sabrina and Sally felt they were already supporting teachers in the classroom as mentors and the motivation to make that their primary focus drove them to make the transition happen. Some participants felt a lack of support from administration as a teacher and wanted to impact a change by transitioning. Anne candidly shared her feelings about lack of support:

I had an admin that was rude and that was a big factor in thinking about leaving. How classes ran and how teachers were not supported. I knew I wanted to help with that.

Education is so demanding. Teachers need support. Lack of support from that admin was pathetic. I spent the last year teaching, mentoring new teachers. I spent a lot of my day as a teacher doing that. My bucket was full by helping teachers navigate curriculum, use gradebooks, etc. I was ready to move. (Interview, 2019)

The essence of the participants' experiences provide a comprehensive understanding of motivational factors contributing to why they transitioned from the classroom to the role of instructional coach.

**Sub-question 2.** Sub question two was: What practical knowledge do teachers acquire about instructional coaching and the role of instructional coach as they fully transition into the role? Two themes emerged to define the essence of the participants' experiences and the practical knowledge they acquired as they fully transitioned into the role: transitions are difficult

but rewarding and relationships matter. Anne shared her experience with the transition and noted the need to change how you use skills differently when working with adults and it is still something she is working on in her role (Online Focus Group 5, 2019). Veronica recalled that she did not believe you can be fully prepared when you make the transition, but the on the job training and growth as an educator is the reward to that initial uncertainty (Online Focus Group 5, 2019). In her interview, Sally shared that making the transition made her miss students and the rewards of seeing them grow as learners, but the reward of the transition was helping adults find relevance in education (Interview, 2019). Participants reflected upon the difficulty of the transition and the rewards it brings. Although they may have struggled with what their role was initially, many participants were able to make the role what it needed to be. Martin, Betty, Nanette, Marjorie, and Sally remarked on the difficulties of establishing their roles initially, but once they were able to show and explain what they could do with/for teachers, their roles were established and they could reap the rewards. To escape the loneliness and isolation they first experienced through the transition, participants learned to seek outside learning networks, push into classrooms, eat lunch with teachers/teams, and complete easy tasks to win teacher support. Lisa shared the initial transition was hard and simple things like walking the halls forced teachers to talk to her, but also forced her to interact (Interview, 2019).

Participants shared the importance of building relationships and trust as essential to their role as instructional coach. Helen expressed the importance of relationships, understanding how to approach teachers, and how crucial it is in her role as instructional coach:

It is 100% about relationships. And I think there were two things I learned early on that I was able to implement. One was identifying traits in teachers in my building that would allow me to identify with them because my brain works a certain way, but it is not the

same as everybody else's brain . . .but I need to speak her language so that I have to establish rapport, I have to establish nonthreatening situations, I have to establish, um, I'm not evaluate Tori, right? But at the same time, we're all moving in the same direction towards a common school goal. (Interview, 2019)

Participants used the words/phrases building relationships, trust, supportive collaborator, and relationships in regards to practical knowledge they acquired about instructional coaching and the role as they fully transitioned. Jane, Nanette, Helen, Lisa, Martin, and Veronica all stressed the importance of building relationships in their letter to a teacher considering a transition to instructional coach. Veronica noted the similarity in building relationships with students and adults, just like those students, “once they know you care, they care what you know” (Letter, 2019).

Participants also shared practical knowledge and understanding that relationships will change when you change roles. In her letter to teacher, online bulletin board Online Focus Group, posts, and interview, Nanette candidly reflects on peer perceptions and how they changed once she transitioned into the role. Because she began as a coach in the same building she taught in, Veronica found it difficult to maintain relationships with staff, but now that she works at the district level as a coach, it is easier to build relationships (Interview, 2019). When she was in the same school, shortly after the transition, she asked administration to help teachers understand her role and it helped her build up relationships that had been damaged when she changed roles. Jane cautions newly appointed instructional coaches to be aware that one day a teacher may want your help, the next they may not, but building relationships can help a coach avoid that type of conflict (Online Focus Group 4, 2019).

**Sub-question 3.** Sub-question three was: What valuable advice or information would instructional coaches find significant to share with current classroom teachers who are considering the same transition? The two emerging themes that support participants' responses relating to this question include transitions are difficult but rewarding and relationships matter. One of the terms several participants used throughout reflections was get thicker skin. The term was used when participants discussed the transition itself and teacher perceptions as individuals transitioned. In the online bulletin board discussion group, Betty shared when her role changed, so did teacher perceptions. She cautions newly appointed instructional coaches to get thicker skin because not everyone will welcome you or what you do now (Online Focus Group 4, 2019). Nanette, Anne, and Martin also advised newly appointed coaches to get thick skin. In the visual below, Bianca discusses many of the feelings she felt as she made a lateral transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach:

Figure 1. Letter to Teacher Considering Transition to Coach

Dear Future Coach,

Congratulations, you are transitioning from teacher to instructional coach! Sure in most instances it is lateral move but is so many ways it is so much more. Be prepared for a roller coaster of a first year, be able to wipe tears (yours and others), gain thicker skin, learn the power of a positive no, become a leader of your school, but most of all learn to love this new position.

Martin also cautions those making the transition to recognize the position is not for the faint of heart, you may not always know the answer or be able to coach a teacher immediately, but through building relationships and allowing your presence to be known, the rewards of coaching are endless (Interview, Letter, 2019). Sally, sharing the sadness she felt leaving students, advised those transitioning to the role of instructional coach to get into classes with

teachers to take away the sadness and have a positive impact on instructional practices (Interview, 2019).

When building relationships and making the transition, Sabrina suggests being a coach, not a facilitator and to use tact and the skills you already have to support adult learners (Interview, 2019). Helen suggests recognizing you should be the coach you wish you had when transitioning (Interview, 2019). Participants shared flexibility, knowing the type of supports teachers need, teacher buy in, build trust, confidentiality, and knowing how to manage your time as crucial elements to succeeding in the role of instructional coach both as coaches develop in the role and build relationships. Participants also shared their fears, frustrations, challenges, successes, personal growth, to provide advice to those teachers considering a transition from the classroom to instructional coaching.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided a description of the research study and the results, beginning with individual descriptions of the participants. Individual descriptions of all 13 participants was followed by steps for data analysis and a description of emerging themes. Four themes and multiple subthemes were derived from phenomenological data. The four themes that emerged included; (a) need for change; (b) call to support teachers; (c) transitions are difficult but rewarding; and (d) relationships matter. The participants' stories and reflections were shared through textual and structural descriptions within the discussions of themes and provided a composite portrayal of the participants' experiences with the phenomenon. After detailed descriptions of themes and subthemes, narrative answers were provided to each research question using the themes and participant experiences to support responses to the research questions.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

### Overview

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of 13 teachers who transitioned from the classroom to become instructional coaches. This chapter provides a summary of the findings of this study, discussions of the relationship of the study to empirical and theoretical research, and the empirical, theoretical, and practical implications. Delimitations, limitations, and recommendations for future research are also described. Chapter five concludes with a summary.

### Summary of Findings

Using a transcendental phenomenological research design to frame the study provided the essence of the phenomenon as experienced by former classroom teachers who transitioned to the role of instructional coach. In order to examine the research questions, 13 former classroom teachers, from two online instructional coaching communities, who transitioned from the classroom to instructional coaching participated in the study. Data was gathered using three different methods of data collection, including Interviews, an online bulletin board discussion group, and a hypothetical letter to a teacher considering a transition from the classroom to instructional coaching. Data was analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) methods of data analysis and Saldana's (2013) coding process for identifying themes and concepts to provide a deep reflection and analysis of individual experiences of the phenomenon. After analyzing data, four themes emerged that addressed all of the research questions. The themes included: (a) need for change; (b) call to support teachers; (c) transitions are difficult but rewarding; and (d) relationships matter.

The central research question asked: What are the experiences of teachers who transitioned from the role of classroom teacher to instructional coach? Participant experiences were characterized as a need for change, a call to support teachers, transitions are difficult but rewarding, and relationships matter. The former teachers who transitioned to instructional coach experienced a need to move on from the classroom, but remain in education for varying reasons that included, but are not limited to: teacher burnout from job demands and lack of support, a need to observe and work to affect change in student learning and teacher instructional practices from a different perspective than classroom teacher, and encouragement from administration and school or district leadership. All participants felt a need to support teachers and a calling to work with adult learners. Working with teachers was refreshing and eye opening to most participants when they reflected upon what they saw from a different perspective. All participants mentioned the sense of accomplishment they felt when they worked closely with teachers to positively affect changes in classroom practices and student learning through collaboration.

Participants recognized that transitioning to instructional coaching from classroom teaching, although difficult at first, proved rewarding. Throughout data collection, participants noted a lack of role definition and changing relationships with peers as two of the more difficult aspects of the transition. Although the transition was difficult in the initial year of coaching, as instructional coaches established their roles and built relationships with teachers, they felt they reaped the rewards of helping change mindsets and positively affecting classroom instruction and student learning. Participants reflected that although relationships with teachers in their schools may change or be non-existent, school-based relationships with teachers was a foundation to their role and without the relationships they would be unsuccessful in their role.

The first sub-question asked: What key motivational factors influence teachers to transition from the role of classroom teacher to instructional coach? Throughout reflections in data collection, participants shared varying reasons for motivation to seek a new role as instructional coach. Reasons included a need to move on, a readiness for change, a curiosity to view education from a different perspective, and encouragement from leadership. Through data collection, many of the participants felt not only the need for change, but also a call to support teachers as they considered the transition. The frustrations and successes in their classrooms led to many participants' reasons for wanting a change. All participants wanted to share their own classroom successes and failures to support teachers in the classroom and noted their experiences teaching as a major catalyst for making the transition. Participants also noted the need to provide support they may have not received in their classroom as a motivational factor in making the transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach.

The second sub-question asked: What practical knowledge do teachers acquire about instructional coaching and the role of instructional coach as they fully transition into the role? Classroom teachers' turned instructional coaches shared that although the transition was initially difficult, it has been a rewarding experience. Instructional coaches noted the need to institute and define the role as essential when they transitioned into the role. Participants shared administrators' and teachers' need to understand the instructional coach role, just as much as the instructional coaches need to understand it to affect positive changes in a schools. Many instructional coaches shared they had to complete some mundane tasks at first, to gain teacher trust, but upon doing so it helped them build relationships and establish rapport in schools. Reflections and discussions about building relationships, strategies and skills needed to build

relationships, and how relationships can change were shared by all participants and how it affected their initial and full transition into the coaching role.

The third sub-question asked: What valuable advice or information would instructional coaches find significant to share with current classroom teachers who are considering the same transition? Participants shared and reflected upon their own experiences making the transition and suggested those who are considering making the change recognize they will need to get thicker skin and accept that not every teacher they will work with will have the same philosophy as you do. Many participants referred back their own experiences with teachers and cautioned those who may be considering the transition to understand that changing roles comes with frustrations, fears, and some success, but the outcome after the first year or so has many rewards. Participants also cautioned teachers who may be considering the transition to understand teaching and working with adults is different than working with children. The ability to keep, change, and build relationships was a consistent theme many participants felt essential to their role as instructional coach and many also stressed the importance of the skill to teachers considering the same transition they made when moving from the classroom to coaching.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of the classroom teacher who made the transition to instructional coaching. A transcendental phenomenological study was used to examine the essence of the participants' experiences as they transitioned from the classroom to instructional coaching. Four central themes emerged from the data analysis: (a) need for change; (b) call to support teachers; (c) transitions are difficult but rewarding; and (d) relationships matter. The themes reflect the essences of the former classroom teachers' experiences who transitioned from the role of

classroom teacher to the role of instructional coach. This study addresses the absence of the teachers' voices regarding the lived experiences of those teachers who transitioned into an instructional coach role. Current research does not address that although some teachers may leave the field entirely (You & Conley, 2014), others transition to different roles within the educational field (Bogler & Nir, 2014; Ingersoll, 2016). The purpose of this section is to discuss the study findings in relation to empirical and theoretical literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

### **Empirical Relationship**

This study focuses on the motivations that may have led to a classroom teachers decision to transition from the classroom to instructional coaching. Current literature regarding the pressures of classroom teachers and what could motivate them to change roles or transition in education includes job satisfaction and the school environment (Barnatt et al., 2017; Bogler and Nir, 2015; Ingersoll 2016; Kapa & Gimber, 2017; Malinen & Savolainen, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2014), a need for professional growth (Cox, 2015; Wax & Wertheim, 2015), a lack of support from administration and the consistent demands on their time (Kapa & Gimbert, 2018; Richter et al., 2013; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Tickle et al., 2011) helps confirm the emerging theme of a need for change in this study. Additionally, this study supports the research that indicates some teachers transition to roles because of encouragement from peers or leadership, or a desire to lead teachers (Carver, 2016; Smith et al., 2016). Few empirical sources focus on the experiences of teachers who transitioned to literacy coaching from the classroom (Chval et al., 2010; MacPhee & Jewett, 2016; Rainville & Jones, 2008) or teacher transitions to different grade levels or buildings (Carlyon, 2014). Given this study focused on the experiences of 13 classroom teachers from two online communities, who transitioned to instructional coach, this research extends the current literature and supports

existing literature concerning why teachers leave the classroom and choose to remain in education, but specifically focuses on switching roles from classroom to instructional coaching.

Studies suggest professional development for teachers is often a reaction to the current needs of the division and schools teachers work in, rather than a reaction to individual teacher needs (Avidov-Ungar, 2016; Rivera-McCutchen & Panero, 2013). The 13 participants in this study consistently remarked upon their need to support teacher learning because they felt they did not receive the professional development they needed or felt a call to support teachers where they needed the most help. The experiences of the participants supports literature defining the need for professional development in schools to reach growing teacher needs (Avidov-Ungar, 2016; Desimone, 2009; McDonald, 2014; Rivera-McCutchen & Panero, 2013) and individualized collaborative partnerships to affect areas teachers' identified as needing growth (Desimone et al., 2002; Furner & McCulla, 2018; Girvan, Conneely & Tangey, 2016). Participants shared how fulfilled they felt when they collaborated with teachers to provide what they needed, but also how rewarding it was knowing they were not just providing one and done professional development opportunities.

As this study examined the experiences of adult learning and how the teacher turned instructional coach reflected upon coaching interactions, this study supports the literature concerning the need for adult learners to remain actively involved in learning (Knowles et al., 2011), to have the ability to share their learning with others, and reflect upon those experiences (Ambler, 2015; Henschke, 2011; Hill, 2014; Owens et al., 2016; Peterson & Ray, 2013). This study extends Collett's (2012) research regarding a teacher's need to mentor other teachers and Huston and Weaver's (2007) studies regarding a mentor's role in promoting positive changes in schools, while addressing their own professional growth needs. Participants in this study shared

not only their successes with impacting classrooms and teacher growth, but also their own personal growth, how it helped them identify with their new role, and growth as they transitioned fully into the role.

None of the participants seemed to indicate they had prepared for the expectations within changing roles; most participants were surprised by the lack of understanding of the role and the reaction of peers when they transitioned. Much of the literature involves teacher transitions from grade level/content areas (Carlyon, 2014) in a school or classroom to literacy coaching (Chval et al., 2010; MacPhee & Jewett, 2016; Rainville & Jones, 2008), rather than a specific focus on instructional coaching in schools. The data in this study contributes to the existing literature concerning instructional coaching roles and provides a new perspective about the roles because it allowed participants from two specific online instructional coaching communities to share their experiences transitioning from the classroom to coaching. Much like Del Corso & Rehffuss' (2011) study, this study used a narrative approach to examine the experiences of teachers who transitioned to instructional coach and what they experienced personally, what they learned from the experience, and what they would share with others considering the same transition.

Participants shared that although they had some difficulties making the transition, once fully immersed in the role, they felt their experiences in the classroom impacted teachers and students, which was extremely rewarding for all participants. As suggested by Aguilar's (2013) study, the former classroom teachers shared their experiences in their own classroom to impact instructional practices of the teachers they worked with, which made the transition worthwhile to them. Through the transition and establishing the role of instructional coach, participants were able to observe teacher growth by sharing their own experiences, strategies, and structures in a non-evaluative, supportive manner. The transitions that participants made in this study support

Motulsky's (2010) study about how career decisions are relatable to relationships with others, our own sense of self, and how we connect to society (in this study, educational society).

Participants in the study could reflect on how the transition was based on their need to not only support others and the schools they worked in, but also to grow as a professional themselves, although the transition was difficult at first. Many of the participants struggled with the transition from the classroom to instructional coaching because they were unclear of their role and noted it was often based on the needs of the school or the administration.

Current literature reflects that the role of the instructional coach is often dependent on school needs, rather than teacher needs (Hartman, 2013; Teemant, Wink, & Tyra, 2010). As an extension of the literature, most participants in this study reflected that although they did address the needs of the school, they recognized the needs of teachers were more important as they fully transitioned in their instructional coaching role. The reflections participants shared in this study extend current literature about adult transitions and specifically identify the experiences of teachers' transition from classroom teaching to instructional coaching.

Rhodes and Beneicke (2002) cautioned instructional coaches to be aware of their role as a partner, not an evaluator. Participants in this study continually reflected upon the importance of establishing roles when building relationships, specifically noting the significance of verbalizing they are not evaluative, they are collaborative. The experiences participants shared and the research from this study confirm that relationships are an important aspect of instructional coaching. As noted by Knight (2007) and evident in this study, instructional coaches should establish themselves as equals with the teachers they work with. Many participants in this study struggled to establish relationships with teachers at first because the teachers felt that the instructional coaches' purpose was to evaluate or that the coaches worked as a spy for

administration or district offices. Although they struggled at first, many participants overcame the negative stigma through building trust by listening to teacher concerns and needs. Current research suggests that building trust through teacher/coach reflection and validating a teacher through confidential counseling (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Thomas et al., 2016; Woulfin & Rigby, 2015) is important in the role of instructional coach/mentor. As noted in this study, many of the participants reflected upon relationship building and the importance of supporting teachers and allowing them to reflect. Participants valued the conversations they had with teachers, not just professionally speaking, also getting to know teachers they worked with on a personal level. The study supports the literature (Aguilar, 2013; Knight 2004, 2009, 2011, 2016) that suggests instructional coaches must establish relationships with teachers, but extends it to examine the initial hardships of establishing those relationships.

### **Theoretical Relationship**

This study used the theoretical frameworks of Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory and Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory as the foundations for this study. Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory provides a framework to examine the change in assumptions, relationships, and behaviors through the transition and Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory examines experiences that impacted the decision to transition. Schlossberg's (1981) theory allows the study to listen to the unique stories of the participants and examine the transition and its essence and Bandura's (1994) theory allows the self to be examined through the transitions. This study addresses a gap in the literature through research designed to examine classroom teachers' new identity as instructional coaches and what they experienced as they made the choice to change roles, what they experienced as they moved into the new role, and what they experienced as they established their identity in the role.

Throughout the study, participants reflected upon their motivations for leaving the classroom and transitioning into the role of instructional coach. Schlossberg's (1981) transition model assumes transitions are due to an event/non-event as a result of one's identity or the world they live in. Participants shared that they were motivated to leave the classroom for a number of reasons that included non-events: lack of support from administration, burn out from the day to day stresses of teaching, the need to grow as an educator, a tug to assist teachers in a more fully implemented mentorship role, and a need to share their experiences and knowledge to positively affect instruction and student learning. As former classroom teachers moved in to the role, they had to establish new roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions (Anderson et al., 2012). As participants reflected upon the moving in phase (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1981) of the transitional process, most experienced fear and frustration of not knowing their role or if they were successful, how peers would respond to them in their new role/how they did respond to them in their new role, and how they could morph into the role successfully. Although many were encouraged to transition to the role of instructional coach, they still struggled in their initial year. As they transitioned into the role, participants became more comfortable the role they moved into and became aware of the rules, norms, and expectations of the role. Participants learned the transition was difficult but rewarding and some acknowledged they needed to have "thicker skin" (Nanette, Letter, 2019; Bianca and Jane, Focus Group, 2019) through the moving in process. Deciding to make the transition and move into the role of instructional coach was affected by participant's self-efficacy and identity and can be connected to Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory because the decisions teachers made to transition was impacted by cognitive, motivational, and affective factors (Bandura et al., 2003).

Participants shared their decision to transition into the role of instructional coach was impacted by a combination or all of the following cognitive, motivational, and affective factors: a need to use their experiences and knowledge for professional growth both personally and to support other teachers, a need to get out of the day to day constraints of the classroom and the stresses felt through the day to day, and a need to support teacher professional development/build relationships with teachers to positively affect instructional practices and student learning. The interplay of personal determinants between Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory and Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory provides a framework for examining the experiences of former classroom teacher's decision to *move into* the role of instructional coach. Four sets of factors influenced participants' transition to the role of instructional coach, which included situation, self, supports, and strategies (Anderson et al., 2012; Plimmer & Schmidt, 2007; Schlossberg, 2011).

In this particular stage of transition, participants shared situations that affected their decision, which included: triggers for the transition, the timing of the transition in regards to their own needs (emotional, social, intellectual), stressors of the transition, and their own perceptions of the transition. Again, participants felt the need to change because of their own frustrations or want to support other teachers. Many participants shared the timing was just right because of movement or additions of opportunities in their school division, encouragement from administration, or a need to remove themselves from the stagnant classroom environment to a position that would provide them professional growth. As they reflected upon their own perceptions of the transition, many felt they could make a positive impact on student learning/instructional practices, while some shared they knew they could do a better job than current instructional coaches.

When participants shared what they experienced as they moved from the classroom to the role of coach, they experienced a shift in identity and self-efficacy because of a new, unfamiliar role. Validation of this study and self is important because “qualitative research might present a better place to start in that transitions could be viewed holistically, as perceived by individuals experiencing them” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 226). As former teachers transitioned fully into their role of instructional coach, establishing their new role, they were “learning the ropes” (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 185) and moving through the transition. After their initial years as an instructional coach, participants found balance and shared how the transition affected them and those they worked with. Many participants shared that once their role was defined, explained, and established, they felt it was the best decision they had made in their career.

The supports available to former teacher turned instructional coach impacted how they experienced their new role. Several participants mentioned establishing a professional learning network through the school district or online communities helping them in learning their new role. The ability to reflect with a peer in the same position and bounce ideas off of them was important to staying positive and focused in their new role. As a factor of influence in the transition model (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011), supports throughout the experience are important to hear about from the teacher turned instructional coach because there is a lack of literature regarding how supports factor into the transitional stages of a new role. Participants shared how self and identity factored into the moving through phase in this study and reflected upon the initial difficulty of knowing their place in a building and the time and relationship building it took to create an identity or sense of self as they moved through the new role. This study connects to Bandura’s (1994) social cognitive theory because it highlights the experiences of participants’ transition from the classroom to instructional coaching and how their beliefs help

determine how opportunities and obstacles are perceived as they *move in and through* the transition.

Because it was a new, unfamiliar role, participants acknowledged the time it took to establish the role of instructional coach and also shared coping techniques they used to overcome challenges in establishing a role. As the fourth factor of influence in transitions, coping (Schlossberg, 2011) assists the individual in reframing/changing the situation or reducing stress in the situation. Participants shared building relationships with teachers to help them establish their role in a school often required moving out of their comfort zone. Many participants noted they would invite themselves to team meetings, show up in classes to assist without asking, and eat lunch in the teacher work room as a coping mechanism for moving into and through the transition. Through coping, many participants were able to change the situation and change teacher mindset of the role of the instructional coach and what they could do for teachers. They also reframed the situation by inserting themselves in areas they normally were not invited to, therefore prompting conversation with teachers.

Although moving out signifies the end of a transition and movement to a new role or start (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1981), this study examined moving out as what the teacher turned instructional coach will take from the experience or share with others considering the same transition. Through self-reflection, many participants shared deep reflections of their transition and advice in their hypothetical letter to a teacher considering a transition to instructional coaching. Again, all shared the difficulties moving into the role and establishing boundaries/expectations/relationships in the beginning stages of the new role. All participants shared their successes and how they felt when they knew they had made a difference in instruction, a school, a classroom, or student learning. Several instructional coaches cautioned

that although their role was established after the first year, they still wore many hats, other than the role they had established. Almost all of the participants reflected upon the ability to see all sides of education, and some of the disillusionment/new knowledge they acquired, to include, but not limited to: decision making processes, the why behind decisions they may have disagreed with as a teacher, a new view of teachers they originally had respect for, and new ideas they would use, should they return to the classroom. Some participants shared they originally thought they might have gone into administration, but because of their experience as instructional coach, they would not. Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory, factors that influence transition (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011), and Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory are appropriate lenses to study the experiences of teachers who move into the role of instructional, what they experience through the transition, and what they would share with others because they utilize situation, self, supports, and strategies to examine the experiences and implications of the transition.

### **Implications**

The findings in this transcendental phenomenological study of the experiences of teachers who transitioned from the classroom to instructional coaching have implications for teachers, administrators, and other educational stakeholders. Participants revealed that although the transition was difficult at first, there were many rewards for making the transition. This section discusses the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications derived from the research.

### **Theoretical**

This study uses Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory and Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory as a framework to examine how teachers describe their experiences as they transitioned from the role of classroom teacher to the role of instructional coach. This study

found the tenets and factors in each theory were applicable to studying motivational factors and experiences of teachers making the transition and how those factors and experiences can be shared with others considering the same transition. Through Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory, the factors that influence the transition (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011), Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory, and what participants shared about the experience revealed that situations, self, supports, and strategies were integral factors of *moving into* the transition, what they experienced as they moved through the transition, and what they took from the transition. The study also revealed that teachers who transitioned from the classroom experienced transitional phases through their role change. These transitional phases are indicated as a movement into the role prompted by factors such as a need for change, a need to support peers, burn out from teaching, a lack of support from administration, or a need for professional growth. The results of this study affirmed that as former classroom teachers turned instructional coaches moved through the role, they needed to examine their own perceptions of the role, establish meaning for themselves and others. They also needed to use supports and strategies to establish the role, as well as to continue to thrive in the role. Overall, given this study specifically focused on former teachers transitioning to instructional coaching, it extends current literature regarding why educators leave the classroom to support an examination of why educators leave the classroom but stay in education, and specifically as an instructional coach. These findings have implications for further applications of Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory and Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory to examine the experiences of teachers and/or instructional coaches who transition to administrative roles. It is recommended that schools and school districts examine why teachers stay in education, but transition to different roles. This recommendation includes examining how self identity, situations, and supports that

impact a teacher's decision to make a transition. Examining internal and external factors that contribute to why teachers stay in education, but transition to different roles will allow schools and school districts a better understanding of how they can support and retain educators. This study would be valuable for schools and school districts to examine teacher attrition and retention and how transitions in systems could affect both. It is recommended that schools and school districts examine why teachers transition teacher and how it impacts attrition and retention. Schools and school districts could examine why teachers seek change and if it is impacted by a need for change, a need to support peers, burn out from teaching, a lack of support from administration, or a need for professional growth. Examining those factors can assist schools and school districts in addressing what they can do to support and retain teachers, rather than lose them.

### **Empirical**

Current literature suggests there is a growing concern about why teachers leave the classroom or education entirely. This study sought to examine the concern by listening to the voices of former teachers who left the classroom to become an instructional coach. Through the reflections and experiences participants shared, this study highlights motivational factors that impact why teachers transition to new roles, specifically to the role of instructional coach. Themes in this study revealed that instructional coaches made the decision to change roles because they felt the need to change and move on, they felt a calling to support teachers and affect instructional practices/student learning from outside the classroom, and they felt a need to grow as an educator. Additionally, themes in the study support and confirm much of what is known about adult transitions (they are difficult but rewarding) and roles of instructional coaches and how they change based on schools/needs and how they are relationship builders that affect

schools and instruction.

Administrators, teachers, and other educational stakeholders can benefit from the study and the experiences that the instructional coaches shared through understanding their motivations, frustrations, and successes. Recommendations for educational stakeholders could provide a better understanding of why teachers who transitioned to instructional coach made the decision and what teacher turned coach learned from the change in roles. These recommendations are directed towards these groups because learning about the transition from teacher to instructional coach could assist in a better understanding of why teachers seek different roles in education and could impact teacher attrition and retention in schools and school systems. It is recommended that schools and school systems examine teacher attrition/retention rates and motivational factors that impact why teachers seek transitions. It is also recommended that school systems and districts using instructional coaches provide training and peer assistance for those teachers making the transition from the classroom to coaching. Those teachers considering a transition in or out of education could have a greater understanding of what transitioning roles looks like.

### **Practical**

The results of this study have practical implications for teachers considering a transition to instructional coach, teachers considering a transition out of education, and administrators, districts, and schools who would like to learn about teacher transitions in education. The results are most valuable to teachers considering a change in roles. The lived experiences of participants could assist teachers who are considering a change in roles to examine the decision and how it will affect them and their identity, the difference between teaching adults and students, and what they want to gain as a professional in education. Teachers considering the

transition may find encouragement in making the change in roles after reading about participant experiences and how it helped them grow as educators.

Administrators, districts, and schools concerned with teacher attrition/retention could better understand current teacher frustrations and why teachers leave schools or education entirely. Additionally, administrators, districts, and schools can have a better understanding of the roles of instructional coaches, how to utilize them in their schools/districts, and some of the barriers instructional coaches face in schools as they try and positively affect teacher growth. Through a better understanding of why teachers leave and how instructional coaches can function as a positive catalyst for improved instructional practices and increased student learning opportunities, schools could see growth in both teachers and students. On a more unconventional level, spouses of instructional coaches or teachers could gain a better understanding of what it is like to be an educator today. Through hearing other people's perspectives, we, as humans are better able to understand and empathize.

Other educational stakeholders, such as universities and colleges, could benefit from the shared experiences of teachers who transitioned to instructional coaches and utilize it to develop new courses and pathways for educators who would like to extend their learning beyond classroom teacher. It is recommended that school districts, schools, and higher educational institutions create educational opportunities to learn about instructional coaching. Providing opportunities to learn about instructional coaching will allow teachers who may be considering the transition to better understand what the transition will look like and provide extended learning about the role.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

Delimitations are purposeful decisions a researcher makes to limit or define boundaries of

the study. Using rich descriptions of the experiences of 13 classroom teachers who transitioned to the role of instructional coach, the study was delimited to those who had taught for five years previous to becoming an instructional coach. Additionally, the study only included members from two, specific online instructional coaching communities. Using classroom teachers who had taught for five years prior to instructional coaching and who were members of two online instructional coaching communities allowed me to use participants who could provide significant contributions to achieve thematic saturation of the phenomenon to the extent that emerging themes could be extracted from the data (Moustakas, 1994). Delimitation also included only those participants who were currently an instructional coach. Current instructional coaches who had previously taught for five years allowed for deep meaningful data to support the experiences of participants moving in and through transitions, and what they would share with those considering the same transition. The study was also delimited to those who lived in the United States. Although it would be interesting to gain perspectives of instructional coaches outside of the United States, it was difficult to schedule interviews and timelines for those who offered to participate in the study, therefore they were not included. The participants in the study lived in areas all across the United States, therefore the study was not limited to a specific geographic area.

Limitations in a study can be defined as potential weaknesses of a study that cannot be controlled. Limitations of the study included gender, participant ages, number of participants, grade levels/types of schools. Although I solicited volunteers from two online instructional coaching communities, only one male agreed to participate. The rest of the participants were female. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to specific populations. The ages of participants varied from ages 31 to 58. Participants willingly shared their their ages, family life,

and how time of life or life situations factored into their own experiences with transition, which led to more personable/transparent data. The number of participants was dictated by the timeframe of the study and requirements for participation. Because the study was to take place over a matter of two months, some participants offered to be a part of the study, but could not complete any or all of the data collection because of time constraints. The study was not limited to a specific grade band, public or private school. It is possible that if I had used specific grade bands or types of school, the study may have yielded different results. The study was limited by the number of years participants had been an instructional coach. Only one participant had been an instructional coach for 10 years, the majority of coaches in the study had coached from 1 to 4 years. One final limitation in the study was teachers who became instructional coaches in the same building they taught in. Although those who did teach in the same building felt the same negativity from teachers when they transitioned, they took it more personally because they had established relationships with those peers prior to the role change.

Thick, rich descriptions of setting, data collected and coded, and assumptions of the research can allow “readers to make decisions about transferability” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through the study I used pseudonyms to protect the identities of participants, ensured all hard copies and digital copies of data were secured, utilized member checks to allow oversight from participants’ transcribed interviews, and bracketed biases and assumptions through data analysis and coding processes. All of the above mentioned measures were taken to diminish any issues arising from my interpretations of participant experiences and are documented in Appendix L.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study was a transcendental phenomenological examination of the lived experiences

of classroom teachers who transitioned to the role of instructional coach. The intent of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of why teachers chose to transition and what they experienced through the transition. Researchers in the future could replicate this study through any online instructional coaching community or through a study of multiple school systems/school divisions. While this study was limited to instructional coaches through two online instructional coaching communities, further research could target multiple online coaching communities, specific areas of the United States, specific educational levels (ex. only elementary, only high school), or specific types of schools that utilize instructional coaches (ex. public only, private only). The descriptions of experiences with transitioning could vary based on the levels they coach in and the demographic areas they serve (economy, Title I, etc.) and provide a greater understanding of the why teachers transition from the classroom to instructional coaching and the phenomenon of transition in education, specifically why teachers leave the classroom.

### **Topics**

There were a variety of years' experience as an instructional coach. Future studies could focus on the experiences of instructional coaches who remained in the role until retirement. Many participants were unsure of the career path they would choose if they were to leave instructional coaching. Future research could examine why instructional coaches remain in their role and do or do not return to the classroom. Another possible area of research, based on the number of participants who held degrees in administration, would be to study why teachers who hold advanced degrees choose to transition to instructional coaching, rather than use their advanced degree to transition to administration. Examining their experiences through a transcendental phenomenological approach could be useful to compare the different motivations

for teacher leavers who leave but remain in education.

A different perspective of transitions could be administrators' experience with teachers who transition to instructional coaches in their division or schools and how they have observed the transition from their level and what their experiences were with instructional coaches who worked in their building. Additionally, future research in regards to how districts view the teacher transition from the classroom to instructional coach and how they use coaches could prove helpful when examining teacher attrition/retention and how to elevate exemplary teachers to share their knowledge to affect student learning in a school division.

### **Populations**

This transcendental phenomenological study did not contribute to a wide variety of gender or ethnicity. Because the study only included one male, that population warrants future study. The predominance of Caucasians in the study also warrants future studies on participants from other ethnic backgrounds and their experiences with the transition from teacher to instructional coach. Other populations could focus on low poverty areas or affluent areas to examine how the economy and resources available could impact why a teacher transitions from the classroom to coaching.

### **Designs**

Through transcendental phenomenological studies, researchers are able to capture the essence of participant experiences. Through a comparative case study design, the research would allow for a deeper understanding of why a teacher transitioned to instructional coach from a seemingly more personal perspective. Additionally, a cumulative case study using three school divisions with varying demographics would provide a deeper, richer examination of differences related to experiences, resources, and expectations of teachers/instructional coaches among three

different sites.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of classroom teachers who transitioned to the role of instructional coach. This study focused on the lived experiences of 13 teachers turned coach from two different online instructional coaching communities. Through an examination of the themes in relation to existing theoretical and empirical literature, implications were formulated, as were suggestions for future research. Chapter Five highlighted findings from the research expressing the experiences of classroom teachers who transitioned to the role of instructional coach and how the research connects and adds to previous research. Additionally, this chapter identifies implications and limitations and a conclusion discussing recommendations for future research.

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## APPENDIX A: SITE LETTERS GIVING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Hello Forum Administrator Jessica (Instructional Coaches Connection),

I am currently a member of the forum and am working on my dissertation through Liberty University. I am working on my doctorate in Educational Administration. I am former classroom teacher and instructional coach. I am currently an assistant principal. The purpose of my study is to explore the experiences of teachers transitioning to the role of instructional coach, what they experienced as they made the transition, what they are currently experiencing, and what they would share with teachers considering the transition from classroom to coach. I would like to use several voluntary participants from this forum, along with a few other coaching forums. This study will in no way harm any of the participants, nor will it harm the forum. The study is designed to further explore the experiences of coaches in an anonymous manner. If you have any further questions, I would be happy to answer them.

I am emailing to ask if I can use this forum to find potential participants for this instructional coaching research.

I thank you for considering. Please let me know if I am able to use forum members from this forum on a voluntary basis.

Karin Graham

Hi Karin,

Yes, you may find participants for your study from this forum. I'd appreciate the communication be done through email/private messages although you are free to post here as a contributing member abiding to the rules and standards of the group.

Good luck!

Jessica

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Hello Forum Administrator Tom (Administrator of Future Ready Instructional Coaches),

I am currently a member of the forum and am working on my dissertation through Liberty University. I am working on my doctorate in Educational Administration. I am former classroom teacher and instructional coach. I am currently an assistant principal. The purpose of my study is to explore the experiences of teachers transitioning to the role of instructional coach, what they experienced as they made the transition, what they are currently experiencing, and what they would share with teachers considering the transition from classroom to coach. I would like to use several voluntary participants from this forum, along with a few other coaching forums. This study will in no way harm any of the participants, nor will it harm the forum. The

study is designed to further explore the experiences of coaches in an anonymous manner. If you have any further questions, I would be happy to answer them.

I am emailing to ask if I can use this forum to find potential participants for this instructional coaching research.

I thank you for considering. Please let me know if I am able to use forum members from this forum on a voluntary basis.

Karin Graham

Hey Karin!

Okay – we discussed this as a team and are okay with it. Go ahead and post in the group and maybe start with (This post approved by Future Ready Team) or something like that.

Avril on my team is going to follow up as well as we'd love to see what comes out of it!

Sound good?

Tom

Thomas C. Murray

Director of Innovation, Future Ready Schools  
Alliance for Excellent Education, Washington, DC  
C: (267) 718-2018 | @thomascmurray

## APPENDIX B: SOCIAL MEDIA POST IN ONLINE FORUMS

ATTENTION Forum Members: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctorate in Educational Administration at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to describe the experiences of 12 former classroom teachers who transitioned to the role of instructional coach. The study will explore individual experiences as they moved into the role, what they are experiencing in the role, and what they would share with other teachers considering the same transition. As part of the study, I would ask you to complete a demographic survey, an individual interview (through Skype, Google hangouts, or a platform we are both able to access) that will take approximately 45 mins to an hour, complete a review of the transcribed interview to ensure transcription is accurate that will take approximately 15 – 30 minutes, participate in an online bulletin board focus group using the web platform Padlet that will be conducted over the course of a week and will take approximately one hour (total for the week), and write a hypothetical letter to teacher who is considering a transition from the classroom to instructional coaching that will take approximately 30 minutes (and include a list of questions to assist in the construction of the letter). If you would like to participate, and meet the criteria below, please follow this [link] to a recruitment letter that includes a link to a screening survey. A consent document will be emailed to you if you meet the criteria after you have completed the screening survey. The consent form can be signed electronically and emailed back to me. If you are not chosen for the study, an email will be sent to you indicating you have not been chosen.

To participate, you must have been a teacher for at least five years before becoming an instructional coach. Participants chosen will receive a 50 dollar Amazon gift card after they have completed all of the tasks (listed above) for the study.

## APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT LETTER

[Date]

[Potential Participant]  
Instructional Coach

Dear [Potential Participant]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Educational Administration. The purpose of my research is to explore the individual experiences of a classroom teacher's transition to the role of instructional coach, what they experienced as they moved into the role, what they are currently experiencing in the role, and what they would share with classroom teacher's considering a transition to instructional coach. I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you were previously a teacher for at least 5 years, are currently an instructional coach in a school (or schools/school division), and are willing to participate, you will complete a Google demographic survey for basic information (this task should take approximately 10 minutes and will have a one week window to complete), you will be asked to participate in an online video interview (45-60 minutes, using Skype, Google Hang Out, Web Ex or an online video forum accessible to both of us), you will review the researcher's transcription of your answers to interview questions for accuracy which will be emailed to you (this task should take approximately 15 -30 minutes and will have a one week window for completion), you will participate in an online focus group Online Focus Group using a web platform called Padlet in which you will respond to five questions and respond to at least one other participants responses per question (approximately 60 minutes over a period of 10 days for the task to be completed), and you will write a letter, based on your experiences, to a teacher considering the transition to instructional coach (there are prompts/questions to help guide you as you write and this task should take approximately 45 minutes to compose and you will have a window of one week to email the letter to me). Your name and/or other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but this information will remain confidential. You will be assigned a pseudonym to protect your confidentiality.

To be chosen as a possible participant in this study please complete the screening survey located in this [link]. If you are chosen for the study, I will email you a consent form. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign the form if you would like to participate in the study. The document is set up for you to sign it electronically, either by drawing your signature or typing it using HelloSign. After you have signed the consent form, please click on the link at the bottom of the consent form and complete the demographics survey. In the survey, there is a place for you to indicate times/dates you are available to interview and participate in a focus group, in addition to what online video venues you can access. If you are not chosen for the study, you will receive an email indicating you have not been chosen.

If you choose to participate and complete all aspects of this study, you will receive a \$50.00 Amazon gift card.

Sincerely,

Karin E. Graham  
Liberty University Doctoral Candidate

**APPENDIX D: SCREENING SURVEY**

Screening Survey:

What is your name?

What is your email address?

How many years have you taught in the classroom prior to becoming an instructional coach?

Are you currently serving as an instructional coach?

How many years have you been an instructional coach?

Thank you for completing the survey! A follow up email will be sent to the email you have listed above indicating if you have been chosen for the study or not. I appreciate your time.

**APPENDIX E: GOOGLE FORM DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY**

For this study I am looking for at least 12 participants that are prior classroom teachers (with at least five years of experience) and have transitioned to the role of instructional coach. This survey is confirmation that you have been chosen to be a participant in the study based on your answers in the screening survey. I appreciate your participation and time for helping me complete this study. I am looking forward to hearing your experiences. Thank you!

Your name (first and last name):

Gender:

Age:

Total years of teaching prior to role as instructional coach:

Total years as instructional coach:

Which grade levels do you work with (circle all that apply):

Elementary

Middle School

High School

Do you work in a private or public school?:

Times/Dates available for interview (January \_\_\_\_\_ - January \_\_\_\_\_)

Please list any/all web based video you have access to (ex. Skype, Google Hang-Out, WebEx, etc):

**APPENDIX F: THANK YOU EMAIL**

Dear Sorry Notchosen,

I greatly appreciate your willingness to participate in this study. Unfortunately, I will be unable to use you as a participant. I truly appreciate that you offered to be a part of the study, should something change, and I am able to use you in the study, I will be sure to contact you via email.

Thank you,

Karin E. Graham

## APPENDIX G: CONSENT FORM

### THE TRANSITION FROM CLASSROOM TEACHER TO INSTRUCTIONAL COACH: A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

**Karin E. Graham**  
**Liberty University**  
**School of Education**

You are invited to be in a research study aimed at understanding the transition of a classroom teacher to instructional coach and the experiences as you moved into the role, what you have experienced as an instructional coach, and what you would share with teachers considering the same transition. You were selected as a possible participant because you made the transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach and have been a classroom teacher for at least five years. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Karin E. Graham, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University is conducting this study.

**Background Information:** The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of teachers who have transitioned from the classroom to the role of instructional coach.

**Procedures:** If you agree to be in this study, and sign the consent form, you are requested to do the following tasks:

- Participate in a 45-60-minute interview with the researcher. The interview will take place during a mutually agreed upon time and venue using Facetime, Skype, Google Hang Out, or Web Ex. The interview will be audio and/or video recorded.
- Each participant will review the transcribed interview questions they answered to ensure accuracy of information. Expected time for completion of review is 15 -30 minutes.
- Participate in an online bulletin board focus group with other instructional coach participants and the researcher. The online bulletin board focus group will utilize a web application called Padlet. Each focus group member will respond to a question and respond to another focus group member's post at least once. The focus group will be conducted online over a period of a week. Focus group members should respond daily to questions asked/responses to other members. The approximate amount of time to complete this task is one hour (total).
- Construct a hypothetical letter to teachers who may be considering the transition from classroom to coach sharing your experiences with the decision, the transition, what you have experienced, and what suggestions you have. The researcher has prepared a list of questions you may use to construct the letter. The letter should take approximately 45 minutes to complete and will be the final procedure for participants in this study. Participants will be given a week to compose the hypothetical letter.

**Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:** The risks involved in this study are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from participation in this research. The benefits to society, specifically those in education, include gaining an understanding of why teachers transition from the role of teacher to the role of instructional coach, because there is little research giving a voice to the experiences of teachers and why they decided to transition from the classroom to instructional coach.

**Compensation:** Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Participants will receive a \$50.00 Amazon gift card for fully participating in all aspects of the data collection tasks noted above.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Research records, recordings, and associated transcripts will be stored securely in password protected data files. Written and hard copy records will be kept in a secure file cabinet until such time that they are converted to electronic form and stored on a password-protected computer. All electronic files will be backed up using an online backup service. Access to data will be limited to the researcher and will not be used for purposes outside of this study without additional consent of research participants. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Pseudonyms will be assigned to all participants and used in all written or electronic records and reports to protect participant identity.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw from the Study:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher by email at [kgraham10@liberty.edu](mailto:kgraham10@liberty.edu). Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from the online bulletin board focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. The online bulletin board focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw from the study.

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Karin Graham. You may ask any questions you have now about this study via e-mail to [kgraham10@liberty.edu](mailto:kgraham10@liberty.edu) or by calling (434) 531-2816. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact the researcher at the same e-mail address or telephone number. This study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Gail Collins at [gcollins2@liberty.edu](mailto:gcollins2@liberty.edu), a professor at Liberty University.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:** I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record and/or video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself – where you grew up, your family, what led you to pursue a career in education.
2. Describe your experiences and attitudes while you were a classroom teacher that existed within the walls of your classroom – frustrations, successes, areas for growth, etc.
3. Describe your experiences and attitudes while you were a classroom teacher that existed outside the walls of your classroom – interactions with administration, professional development, collegial relations, peer interactions/collaboration.
4. What were your impressions of instructional coaches while you were a classroom teacher?
5. What key motivational factors influenced you to transition from the role of classroom teacher to the role of instructional coach?
6. What specific qualities or skills do you feel were necessary to be successful in your new role of instructional coach?
7. What fears or concerns did you have as you considered making the transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach?
8. Please describe your initial feelings or attitudes pertaining to your role as instructional coach.
9. Describe some successes and/or areas of growth that you faced as a new instructional coach.
10. Describe some challenges you faced as a new instructional coach.
11. What helps you succeed in your role as a coach?
  - a. What skills or strategies do you use as you coach?
  - b. How did you learn to connect with teachers/form relationships?
  - c. How do you feel you affect others and their instructional practices as an instructional coach? Teachers? Whole school? Students? Other coaches?

12. Did your thoughts about your own strengths or weaknesses as an educator change as a result of being in the role of an instructional coach?
13. How would you describe your successes and challenges of being an instructional coach to a current classroom teacher considering this transition?
14. Is there anything else you would like to share about your transition from a classroom teacher to the role of instructional coach?

**APPENDIX I: ONLINE BULLETIN BOARD FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

1. What internal or external factors motivated you to transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach?
2. What were some of the successes and/or challenges that you faced when you were deciding to transition from the classroom to coaching?
3. What were some of the successes and/or challenges that you experienced as you transitioned into the role of instructional coach? Did your attitudes about education and instruction change and if they did, how so?
4. In your role as an instructional coach, what are some successes and/or challenges that you would share with other teachers considering such a transition?
5. How did the experiences/situations/stories you encountered as a classroom teacher turned instructional coach challenge or highlight your role as an educator?

## **APPENDIX J: GUIDELINES FOR HYPOTHETICAL LETTER FROM INSTRUCTIONAL COACH TO TEACHER**

Participant:

Please craft a personal letter through your choice of a Google Document or Word document to a teacher who may be considering transitioning from the classroom to the role of instructional coach. In the letter, please share your experiences with the teacher. This is a hypothetical letter and will not be shared with another teacher without permission. If you would like to share your letter with other teachers considering the transition, please note it in the following manner, at the end of the letter:

\*I would like this letter to be shared with teachers who are considering a transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach.

The following questions can help you with crafting a personal letter to the teacher.

1. What situations led you to transition from the classroom to working with peers in their classroom?
2. What have you experienced thus far as an instructional coach? What were successes, struggles, and some questions/thoughts you still have about the transition?
3. What advice would you give those considering the transition?
4. What are your hopes for those who are considering the transition?

The letter should contain information you would like to share and should be completed by this date: January 20, 2019. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me or call me at (434) 531-2816 and after you have finished email the letter to [kgraham10@liberty.edu](mailto:kgraham10@liberty.edu). Thank you for your time and reflections to share with others. Your experience will greatly benefit the study and help other teachers who may be considering the transition you have made.

**APPENDIX K: THANK YOU AND MEMBER CHECK EMAIL**

Junie B. Jones:

Thank you for participating in the Interview/focus group and sharing your experiences as a classroom teacher transitioning to instructional coach. I appreciate your willingness to share your unique and personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

I have attached a transcript of your interview/focus group discussion and ask that you review the document(s) to be sure the interview/focus group discussion has fully captured the experiences you shared. After reviewing the transcript, you may realize that an important element was overlooked or omitted. Using the editing tool in Google Documents, right click on any area you see needs editing and either suggest an edit, or make a comment, and hit return to save. Please feel free to add comments that would further elaborate or clarify your experience. Please do not edit for grammar – your voice and the way you tell your story is important to the study, regardless of grammar. If you would prefer to edit the document by hand, feel free to print it, make edits, and send to me via email ([kgraham10@liberty.edu](mailto:kgraham10@liberty.edu)) or mail it to: Karin Graham, 53 Antioch Springs Lane, Scottsville, VA 24590.

I greatly value your participation in this research study and your willingness to share your experiences. If you have any questions or concerns, today or in the future, please do not hesitate to ask.

Thank you,

Karin Graham

## APPENDIX L: RESEARCHER REFLEXIVE JOURNAL

### Sample Entries

October 7, 2018	I feel a bit overwhelmed with the dissertation process at this point. There are many things I worry about with the sites to use and collecting data. I am excited but also finding the balance. As I have been typing up interview questions, I know that some of my own experiences need to be suppressed as I talk to participants. I will be sure to set those experiences aside and focus on the main thing – gathering data and interacting.
February 15, 2019 -	Conducted pilot study and found some of the questions solicited sub questions as I interviewed. I will need to make sure I continue to remain cognizant of my own want to insert my experiences into the conversation. Social cues – need to watch that also (I will be able to see online, my reactions, which is helpful to monitor)
March 4, 2019	First interview with Jane. I reviewed questions beforehand. I definitely used my coaching skills to listen closely and avoid my own sharing my own feelings/experiences. Helped to see myself, as I noted before. Interview was a bit shorter than I expected.
March 7, 2019	Third interview – I assumed that because Martin was a male, he would not share much and would be brief with his experiences. Not so, he was talkative and very animated throughout. I had to stop myself from sharing my own frustrations with trying to get into classrooms as a coach.
March 12, 2019	I am on sixth interview. I am becoming more familiar with how to move along and how to ask for elaboration when needed. Nanette’s interview lasted longer than I expected, but she shared a plethora of helpful experiences to inform the study. It was hard for me not to share because of her personality.
March 22, 2019	Last interview went well. It was short but got the information I needed. Checked out the Padlet discussion. Interesting to see the correlations between interviews, what they

	shared and what they extrapolate on with eachother.
April 5, 2019	As I am coding data, looking for significant statements, I am suppressing the urge to try and make those statements fit into categories. I am looking for key words and phrases that reoccur, rather than trying to assign my own perspective based on my experiences. I consulted with a colleague who is in the same process and we talked through how Saldana's coding allows for paraphrasing, not personal interpretation.
April 19, 2019	Coding is becoming a bit easier with Saldana's approach. I am bracketing out my own assumptions and it is becoming easier, the more I look at all the data and the research questions. Continually returning to the questions has truly helped me remain unbiased and focused on participant experiences. The wealth of data and the continual themes I am finding through participants experiences is starting to become evident.
May 10, 2019	I feel I have looked at the focus group data the most. It provides me a concise view of experiences participants shared. Pairing that with the interviews I have identified major themes and sub themes. Reviewing Moustakas has helped me break down each source of data collection and Saldana helps me to organize it in a more conceptual manner. The letters have ideas highlighted that contribute to what I have from the interviews and focus group.

### APPENDIX M: AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Action:</b>
1/28/2019	IRB Approval to Conduct Study
2/3/2019	Reach out to Pilot Study Participants
2/11/2019- 2/20/2019	Conduct Pilot Study/Review Results/Make Adjustments
3/4/2019 – 3/22/2019	Conduct Participant Interviews
3/4/2019 – 3/25/2019	Transcribe Participants Interviews
3/22/2019 -4/01/2019	Online Bulletin Board Focus Group Conducted on Padlet and Reminder Participants to email Hypothetical letters
3/25/2019 – 4/1/2019	Complete Transcriptions and Send to Participants for Member Checks
4/1/2019 – 5/15/2019	Compile data, collect and ensure all hypothetical letters have been collected, begin coding and identifying themes. Begin writing Chapter 4.
5/16/2019 – 6/1/2019	Write Chapter 5 and Submit to Dr. Collins

**APPENDIX N: SAMPLE CODING DOCUMENT**

Raw Data/Significant Statement	Interpretation/Preliminary Coding	Emergent Theme
I knew I needed <b>change</b> after 15 years in classroom, "lost my sparkle", teaching was no longer a challenge - stagnant, principal asked to apply and "share wealth" because of test scores, young kids/more flexible,	No growth in current role, sought growth through transitioning to coach	
<b>Opportunity came along</b> - wanted to jump while had chance, did not want admin	Transition to a role in leadership, not admin	
I was <b>tired</b> of grading, doing the same thing year after year	Need for change, burnt out	
internal - classroom <b>burnout</b> , pregnant, <b>struggling to give 100 % to kids and family</b> , ready for change after 9 years in classroom, earned EdS in instructional tech coaching, enjoyed coaching aspect, wanted challenge	Internal/personal reasons for transitioning	
<b>Admin rude - big factor in leaving classroom</b>	Lack of support and feeling useful as an educator - transition to feel wanted	
...ready for <b>something new</b> , tired of monotony of being a teacher, parents that kept emailing the same question, liked mentoring, helping teachers to make job easier,	Burn out and ready to transition to new role because of the joy from mentoring and helping teachers.	
<b>Time to move</b> but not out of ed, ready to move on,	As an educator, growth and transitioning out of education is not a possibility, change of role is what I want	
		Need for Change

Raw Data/Significant Statement	Interpretation/Preliminary Coding	Emergent Theme
Always a leader, did not want admin, knew I needed a <b>new role</b>	Professional growth and leadership but not administrator	
I <b>look for growth</b> opportunities and trying to see where my leadership can land me in education	Opportunity to grow and lead	
...looking for <b>change</b> , challenge of collaborating and guiding adults seemed harder than children - 4 little ones at home, working with adults seemed easier, see myself grow as educator and mom, principal asked	Seeking new challenge and personal reasons helped with decision to transition.	Need for Change
I want to <b>pour passion into others</b>	Need for change, support teacher growth	
I feel like there is not much PD relevant to teachers and I think being a coach, I can help <b>support professional development that teachers need</b>	Transition to support teachers and impact students	
I realized that <b>teachers need support</b> in classroom and I am already doing that as a mentor, so why not?	Teachers need to feel supported and I would like to transition from helping students to helping teachers	Support Teachers
...felt tug to <b>leave</b> when talked to others who hold support roles, wanted to support adult learners, already in role as mentor teacher/hosted student teachers	Transition because felt need to support adult learners and grow as an educator	
Knowledge lends itself to <b>supporting teachers</b> support students	Transition to want to support teachers and impact student growth	

Raw Data/Significant Statement	Interpretation/Preliminary Coding	Emergent Theme
My initial - I do not want to fail at this. I do not want others to think I am not doing a good job.	Fear of failure and expectations as a coach.	
Not knowing if I may need things. Not much of a job description - "like grasping wet noodles" Understanding my role. No clear rubric or expectation like in teaching	Understanding coaching role and the expectations surrounding the role.	
I was anxious a lot. I was seen as the face of the why they were not doing something right. Asked principal to explain and redefine my role changed how they felt about me and I was less anxious.	Role changes and the many different facets of transition	
I need to learn how to manage time better - harder now than when in classroom	Managing time is important to be effective coach – transition difficult	
Flexibility and ready to change gears based on teacher needs in this role	Transition to what a teacher needs – not what you think they need – difficulty	
.most rewarding to see growth in teachers and their classroom	Rewards of coaching	
first year may be changing a few things - one at a time. Knowing how to manage time, knowing how to analyze data. Being open to listening. Give feedback that is meaningful	Learning in the role-transitions and the process	
Embrace the unknown, still have room to grow though, knew my place teaching, no guide on how to be a coach or what to do day to day as a coach, unsettling. I could mold my own role. . .	No guide but ability to transition into a role created by former teacher	

Transitions are Difficult but Rewarding

Raw Data/Significant Statement	Interpretation/Preliminary Coding	Emergent Theme
I had a need to want to help others, share ideas, need data to back up if I am trying to show a teacher they need to change, addressing what student's need, <b>build relationships to shape a culture.</b>	Importance of building relationships and making teachers see what their needs are without telling them – show	Relationships Matter
<b>Relationships are the key to gaining entry to a classroom</b>	Relationship building helps coaches carry out their role	
strong mentor, relationships with other coaches, <b>having a network of people</b> , as an IC you are on your own island, lonely spy-not admin but helping change things	Loneliness of coaching, but make sure you have a network to support in role – build relationships for you to grow also	
. . .thick skin, <b>relationships change</b> , always room to grow, good communicator, do not need to have subject matter expertise, <b>be willing to try new approaches with people.</b>	Relationship building skills are important in the role/transition. Try to read people to build relationships.	
<b>building relationships with teachers</b> on the other side of the building, having teachers tell me how much they appreciate me, seeing MAP scores increase significantly, learning a different type of teaching outside of the classroom,	Rewards of building relationships	
<b>build relationships</b> , cannot cut conversations short, it is hard	Skill of building relationship-listen and converse	