

A NESTED-CASE STUDY INVESTIGATING DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AT THE
MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL

by

Darrell M. Ashworth

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this nested-case study was to discover the perceptions of middle school teachers regarding the influence of distributed leadership on the subject matter they teach in McCullough County, Tennessee. The central research question for the study was as follows: How do middle school teachers describe the aspects of distributed leadership they encounter? The theoretical framework for this study was distributed leadership theory. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 middle school teachers from five middle schools in McCullough County, Tennessee: 5 English teachers (ELA), 1 math teacher, 4 social studies teachers, and 4 science teachers. Additional data were collected from the observation of a faculty meeting, analysis of distributed leadership documentation that was generated by the state department of education, and entries in my journal. I transcribed and analyzed interview data thoroughly.

An analysis of research journal records was performed to reveal common themes that emerged from the data. These themes, codes within those themes, and one outlier within the data are presented. Pseudonyms were assigned for each participant, each principal, each school, and for the county itself.

Keywords: distributed leadership, educational leadership, teacher leadership, academic capacity.

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List of Abbreviations

Assistant Principal (AP)

Central Research Question (CRQ)

English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

English Language Arts (ELA)

English Language Learners (ELL)

English as a Second Language (ESL)

Intent-Based Leadership (IBL)

International Baccalaureate (IB)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Middle Years Programme (MYP)

Parent, Teacher, Student Association (PTSA)

Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS)

Professional Development (PD)

Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Sub-Question (SQ)

Teacher Advancement Program (TAP)

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)

Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP)

Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE)

Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

In a study of distributed leadership in Chicago elementary schools, Dr. James Spillane (2006) and his team of researchers at Northwestern University found differences in the influences of distributed leadership on mathematics teaching and learning and influences on language arts teaching and learning. Researchers have neither investigated nor replicated Spillane's study at the middle school level or in a region that is more rural than Chicago. This study investigated these different influences of distributed leadership at the middle school level within the subjects of mathematics, science, social studies, and English.

The distributed leadership body of knowledge and the extensive amount of literature produced by Dr. Spillane and other researchers formed the foundation of this study. The purpose of this research study was to add to the body of knowledge within the field of distributed leadership and to help to solve existing problems (Tian, Risku, & Collin, 2016). One central research question and three sub-questions guided this research study. I explored how middle school teachers described the aspects of distributed leadership they encounter. The middle school teachers were asked to describe how they see themselves fitting into the leadership team within their schools.

This chapter provides an overview of the historical, theoretical, and social aspects of distributed leadership. I described my system of beliefs and how these beliefs influenced the research study. Next, I discuss the problem statement, purpose statement, and significance of the study. The chapter closes with a list of definitions and a summary of the chapter.

Background

Distributed leadership is a newer topic within academic studies and the field of education.

Occasional references of the concept appeared in studies and articles during the 1980s and 1990s, but distributed leadership did not become a popular concept in academia until around the turn of the 21st century (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016). Distributed leadership theory appears in various forms throughout the field of education since its inception in the literature. For example, the state of Tennessee places an emphasis on this theory (Tennessee Department of Education, 2019a).

Leadership and distributed leadership both have multiple definitions (Lumby, 2016). Distributed leadership has been defined as both a method of leadership and as a lens that can be utilized to provide a better view of existing leadership (Lumby, 2013). However, Carbone et al. (2017) recommended distributed leadership as a method to increase educational quality, teacher effectiveness, and student learning.

Historical

Aspects of distributed leadership can be traced back to 1250 BC (Bolden, 2011; Ozdemir & Demircioglu, 2014). Gibb is credited with the first academic mention of distributed leadership in the 1954 edition of the *Handbook of Social Psychology* (Gronn, 2002; Ozdemir & Demircioglu, 2014). Around the turn of the 21st century, distributed leadership was popularized by the work of Spillane, Gronn, and others (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016; Youngs, 2009). The rush to implement distributed leadership was not due to fact-based confirmation, but to being the prevailing thought within the field of education at the time (Youngs, 2009). A wide range of studies have been performed in the past 15 years that have tried to discover distributed leadership's place within each level of education (Joslyn, 2018; Youngs, 2009).

Social

Soon after distributed leadership's introduction into the field of educational research,

some began to consider the theory in educational policy debates and writings as a possible solution for some of the issues that public schools were facing, while others viewed distributed leadership as the latest contribution to the flavor of the month club (Gleeson & Knights, 2008; Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016). Since then, researchers have conducted many studies about distributed leadership in education and have published hundreds of articles related to how distributed leadership can improve public schools (Klar, Huggins, Hammonds, & Buskey, 2016), improve learning within individual academic subjects (Karadag, Bektas, Cogaltay, & Yalcin, 2015), improve elementary school and early childhood learning (Kangas, Venninen, & Ojala, 2016), improve learning at the high school level (Sharma et al., 2017), develop teacher leadership (Sales, Moliner, & Amat, 2017), and increase teachers' commitment to their schools (Ross, Lutfi, & Hope, 2016).

Davison et al. (2014) noted that some in our society view distributed leadership as a capacity building mechanism that will also make students more responsible for their own learning. As a point of reference and comparison, climate change is another concept that is often tied to public policy, which has been mentioned as a capacity building mechanism (Davison et al., 2014). This same capacity building via distributed leadership is being evaluated for online learning and teacher education as well (Gressick & Derry, 2010).

Theoretical

Distributed leadership is a leadership model or a lens to look at leadership across an organization (Spillane, 2006). Dr. James Spillane at Northwestern University is the main theorist and researcher in the field of distributed leadership. Spillane found a number of problems at the elementary school level that included the unequal processes of selecting math leaders and language arts leaders in Chicago elementary schools (Northwestern University, 2017b). Through

this research study I expanded upon Spillane's study in Chicago elementary schools by conducting a qualitative study at the middle school level and included interviews with English, math, social studies, and science teachers.

In addition to conducting research and generating theories about what distributed leadership entails, Dr. Spillane developed theories about how leadership is distributed: collaborated, collective, and coordinated (Diamond & Spillane, 2016). Collaborated distribution takes place when a group of two or more people are working on the same job function at the same location and at the same time (Spillane, Diamond, & Jita, 2003). Collective distribution describes how leadership practices are spread over a different group of two or more people who do not work together but whose job functions act interdependently (Spillane et al., 2003). Coordinated distribution of leadership involves tasks that are performed as a series of events that must be completed in a designated sequence in order to complete a larger task or mission (Spillane et al., 2003).

Distributed leadership has many competing theories within the realm of academia (Dinh et al., 2014). These theories include transformational leadership, transactional leadership, inspirational leadership, and implicit leadership (Dinh et al., 2014). Distributed leadership is about changing the actions of these people, repurposing their positions, and repositioning them within the organizational structure to better influence positive change (Carbone et al., 2017).

Situation to Self

I have never been a teacher nor worked in the field of education. My undergraduate and graduate degrees were not in education. I have no connection to or relationship with the school district where this study took place. I feel this lack of connection gave me an advantage in playing the role of journalist and eliciting responses that provided the rich data that are hallmarks

of qualitative studies.

Although I have not worked in the field of education, I have worked as a quality auditor within the realm of manufacturing. In this role, one of my responsibilities was to look for new ways of doing things and help to improve product quality. I strived to bring many of the same attributes from this quality auditor job to my research. My hope was that conducting the research this way would improve the lives of others including the teachers within my study.

Ontological Assumptions

I do believe in absolute truth, which in some cases is biblical truth and other times scientific truths, but I realize more than one reality exists. These different realities are formed through the different experiences people have and the different interactions they have with others. Often, someone can interact with many of the same people with whom another person interacts but can come away with a much different reality or viewpoint. Absolute truth, or principles, can be derived in some cases by sifting through those different realities and finding what is at the core of each of them (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Mentioning that my ontological beliefs are not past tense is important. They are a present and active belief system. Some of the spiritual aspects of my Christian beliefs arise from events and teachings from over 2,000 years ago, but it is imperative that I act these out in current and future situations in which I find myself. This spiritual realm of my constructivist beliefs should have a “Man at Work” sign posted, as I am continually adding to and building upon these beliefs (Sismondo, 2015).

Epistemological Assumptions

I believe that knowledge consists of three things: belief in something, a justification that supports that belief, and the belief being true. A person can believe in something, but if it is

found to be untrue, then it is not really knowledge, but potentially a lie or a fallacy. I believe I gain knowledge from rote learning, being taught by others, life experiences, and by the combination of the Holy Spirit and rational thought processes helping me to discern what is true and untrue (Dew & Foreman, 2014).

As far as answering the philosophical question of what is true or what is truth, I believe that God is the ultimate Truth. Many things in life are true, but as a human, I have to go through a mental, spiritual, and sometimes emotional verification process to make certain that what I believe, see, hear, or experience is really true or not. Sometimes, the antithesis of something that I believe in or experience can be so utterly false as to justify my belief in the truthfulness of my belief or experience. For me, evolution is false and ridiculous. Evolution helps to solidify my belief in God and creation even though I cannot readily supply physical or pictorial evidence of His existence. I relied on the Holy Spirit, life experiences, and the insights provided by the participants in this study to guide me through this research and to help me to discern who or what may be or may not have been truthful (Dew & Foreman, 2014).

My perceptions of people are often correct as far as their honesty or intentions. However, my perceptions of topics are often off as I sometimes will read a research article and adopt its contents as truth. This is an epistemological area where I need to gain some patience, step back, and look at other sources, data, and research before giving my stamp of approval that something is true. Being cognizant of this need to step back to gain perspective was of great importance during the interviews for this research study and the data analysis (Dew & Foreman, 2014).

Axiological Assumptions

While cultures produce commonly shared values, individuals within each culture have individual values as well. The values of each person may not always be understood or shared by

others, but a common reverence must be nurtured to see and place some sort of respect and maybe even admiration for the values and value systems of others (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Just as realities are formed by experiences and interactions with others, values and value systems can often be the systematic product of a person's life experiences and encounters with other people (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The values I practice are truth, honesty, transparency, and goodwill toward others. I also value lifelong learning and education. While values, axiology, morality, and ethical conduct may not be openly discussed by researchers in their published works, many of them do realize the need for these concepts as guiding forces within the realm of research (Biedenbach & Jacobsson, 2016).

The true existence of totally value-free, or value neutral science is, according to Biedenbach and Jacobson (2016) little better than a myth, because research is always based on assumptions and choices, which are inevitably based on values.

Methodological Beliefs

I believe in using an inductive approach to analyzing data in a qualitative research study. The researcher should collect the data, analyze it multiple times, and interact with the participants to make certain the themes and results are accurate and not something that comes from the opinions or belief systems of the researcher. Semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and observations are qualitative methods that I believe in using to elicit responses from participants and to double check their statements and beliefs (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I also have become an advocate of the case study method of qualitative inquiry. A case study can be defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (Yin, 2014, p. 16).

Problem Statement

The problem is that leadership is not always distributed equitably among different academic subjects at the middle school level (Diamond & Spillane, 2016). Middle school leaders (assistant principals, principals, superintendents, and others) do not always treat math, science, English, and social studies the same when selecting leaders within those academic departments (Diamond, 2013). As some researchers and theorists believe that educational leadership has a direct impact on student learning, this qualitative study was needed to discover how middle school teachers of math, English, science, and social studies perceive this phenomenon of educational leadership impact (Karadag et al., 2015; Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010).

Distributed leadership is a tool that some within the field of education (superintendents, principals, parents, teachers, etc.) are looking to in order to improve schools (Klar et al., 2016). Researchers have investigated distributed leadership across educational levels: elementary (Kangas et al., 2016), high school (Halverson & Clifford, 2013), and higher education (Sharma et al., 2017). While some studies at the middle school level do exist (O'Donovan, 2015), none have attempted to replicate Spillane's study.

Some of the current literature related to distributed leadership is focused on the commitment of teachers and other important aspects of education but do not reveal teachers' perceptions of how the different aspects of distributed leadership influence the academic subjects they teach in comparison with other subjects within their respective schools (Devos, Tuytens, & Hulpia, 2014). For this study I interviewed teachers to explore their perceptions of what is happening in the field at the middle school level pertaining to distributed leadership. Of important note, some in the field of education mistakenly assume that within a distributed

perspective everyone is anticipating their turn at leading or is capable of leading (Torrance, 2013a). The participants within this study offered some descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation that were not supportive of distributed leadership as a usable theory, and highlighted initiatives that have failed or are currently failing, along with leaders that failed or were failing.

Two of the major problems with distributed leadership research and implementation thus far have been the focus on teacher improvement and making the classroom more agreeable for teachers rather than actually linking distributed leadership to student learning outcomes (Carbone et al., 2017). Also, a small population within the field of education is too quick to assume that the implementation of distributed leadership or some of its component parts will automatically remedy poor student scores and other learning issues (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016). Spillane (2015) blamed the inability to link leadership and student outcomes with poorly defined leadership initiatives, management, work relationships, and instructional responsibilities that do not allow fully realized educational outcomes or research results to be achieved. While issues related to teachers did come up during the semi-structured interviews, the focus of this research study was to tie different aspects of distributed leadership to their influences on the academic subjects taught by the participants.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this nested-case study was to discover the perceptions of middle school teachers in McCullough County regarding the influence of distributed leadership on the subject matter they teach. For this research, distributed leadership was defined as a leadership model that takes into account the social aspects of leading an organization, all of the actors who take part in leading the organization, their interactions, and the leadership practices they employ

(Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership was the theoretical framework for this study. While not the inventor of distributed leadership, Spillane is a well-respected theorist and researcher within the field of distributed leadership and the originator of the term distributed leadership (Northwestern University, 2017a). Spillane investigated distributed leadership at the elementary level and found differences in how academic leaders are selected in math and language arts (Diamond & Spillane, 2016). This same phenomenon needs to be examined at the middle school level as some researchers and theorists believe that educational leadership has a direct influence on academic improvement and learning (Karadag et al., 2015; Leithwood et al., 2010). Therefore, inequitable processes of selecting leaders within different academic subjects could be having adverse effects on academic improvement and learning in different subject areas.

This study also addressed another gap in the body of literature, as much of the published research on distributed leadership has not mentioned the influence of distributed leadership on the overall climate of schools (Bellibas & Liu, 2018). This study elicited some responses from middle school teachers that illuminate how distributed leadership practices influence the climate of the schools where they teach. Some current research indicates the combined aspects of school climate are what truly leads to better educational outcomes and academic improvement (Bellibas & Liu, 2018).

Significance of the Study

The reason for conducting this study was to expand upon a study conducted by James P. Spillane (2006) and his research team at Northwestern University in 2005. In that study, Spillane (2006) and his other investigators discovered that distributed leadership had different effects on different academic subjects in elementary schools in Chicago, which included differing practices of selecting leadership in individual academic subjects. This study revealed

some of these same hurtful practices were occurring at the middle school level in another region of the country. Since this study found that similar occurrences were happening at another educational level in a completely different setting, researchers should feel compelled to conduct further studies at multiple educational levels. The study may also be a reason for teacher-education programs to discuss this potentially inequitable way of leading different academic subjects.

Tennessee's Department of Education (TDOE) has underscored the importance of distributed leadership at every level and in every building within its jurisdiction. This study also serves as a way of validating whether or not their distributed leadership initiative is producing results (TDOE, 2020d). Harris (2014), noted that school districts, which would include TDOE, have realized that many aspects of educational leadership from the past are not producing the desired results in the present environment.

This study has the potential to impact the school district where it took place, the TDOE, and the general population that would like to see school improvement take place within Tennessee. As school improvement and student achievement fall into the public sphere, potential political, social, and economic benefits could arise from studies that elicit information to improve academic achievement on top of the anticipated educational benefits (Hall, Gunter, & Bragg, 2013). As deficiencies in the distributed leadership initiative were brought to light via this study, the school district will have the opportunity to look at some of the research I used to guide this study. Hopefully, this look into the literature will give them an opportunity to make changes to their distributed leadership program that will help them get the results they want for the schools, children, and parents within their district. This could potentially be performed via examples of other school leaders and how they successfully distributed leadership and brought

about positive change in their respective schools (Klar et al., 2016).

Research Questions

One central research question and three sub-questions framed this research.

Central Research Question

How do middle school teachers describe the aspects of distributed leadership that they encounter (Spillane, 2006)?

Sub-Questions

Sub-question 1. How do middle school teachers describe the interactions of leaders and followers in their schools (Spillane, 2006)? Interactions are one of the aspects of distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006). Interactions between the actors within a school building are a critical part of the overall leadership program (Spillane, 2006).

Sub-question 2. How do middle school teachers describe the workplace situations that have served as catalysts for the generation of new leadership practices in their schools (Spillane, 2006)? Situations are another aspect that comprises distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006). Leadership practices, the third aspect of distributed leadership, can be developed from situations that arise throughout the workday (Spillane, 2006). These situations can be somewhat mundane or can be something life threatening and covered on live television for the world to see (Spillane, 2006).

Sub-question 3. How do middle school teachers describe their roles within the leadership team of their schools (Spillane, 2006)? The leader-plus concept of distributed leadership indicates more than just the principal and the other administrators are part of the leadership team within a school (Spillane, 2006). A small number of the teachers who are interviewed seeing themselves as leaders may indicate leadership is not being distributed within

that school building (Spillane, 2006).

These questions cover the main components that make up distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006). The questions factor in interpersonal aspects of leadership and influence-based factors of leadership that often get lost in traditional one leader and many followers models of leadership (V. Robinson, 2008). They also place the middle school teachers (participants) within the context of the larger system of leadership inside their schools (Lárusdóttir & O'Connor, 2017) and recognize the very broad and open-minded leader-plus concept of distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006).

Definitions

1. *Co-leadership*—Another type of leadership, similar to shared leadership, that acknowledges the presence of more than one leader but does not take into account practices, situations, and other components of the leadership initiative (Spillane, 2006).
2. *Collaborated distribution*—“Occurs when two or more people work together in the same time and place on a particular activity (e.g. facilitating a faculty meeting)” (Diamond & Spillane, 2016, p. 149).
3. *Collective distribution*—“Captures how practice is stretched over two or more people who work separately but interdependently (e.g. supervising classroom instruction)” (Diamond & Spillane, 2016, p. 149).
4. *Coordinated distribution*—“Refers to situations where interdependent tasks are co-performed in a particular sequence. The interdependency here is like a relay race” (Diamond & Spillane, 2016, p. 149).
5. *Distributed leadership*—A leadership model that takes into account the social aspects

of leading an organization (formal or informal), all of the actors that take part in leading the organization, their interactions, and the leadership practices they employ (Harris, 2008).

6. *Distributed perspective*—A lens that sees leadership distributed throughout an organization across multiple people rather than just at one point, possibly the superintendent's office or the principal's office on an organizational chart (Spillane, Harris, Jones, & Mertz, 2015).
7. *Followers*—An individual or a group of people who may or may not be a part of the leadership team. However, these individuals or groups can influence leaders and be influenced by leaders via their interactions with them (Spillane, 2006).
8. *Leader-plus concept*—A component of distributed leadership where the person with the actual title holding responsibility (principal or superintendent in this case), the people whom he or she brings into their inner circle (teacher leaders, consultants, etc.), and any other teacher, parent, community leader, student, or anyone else who steps up and assumes a leadership role in the school or school district (Spillane, 2006).
9. *Leadership*—The influence levied by one or more people onto another person or group in order to motivate them to accomplish the mission of the organization (Spillane, 2006).
10. *Leadership interactions*—How leaders work with other leaders and how leaders work with followers to achieve the mission of an organization (Spillane, 2006).
11. *Leadership positions*—Within the context of this study, a leadership position can be a principal, assistant principal, superintendent, teacher leader, consultant, parent, or

student who influences the outcomes of a school or school district (Spillane, 2006).

12. *Leadership practice*—Leadership activities performed by the person in charge, those people who assume a leadership role in the organization, and those who follow them on a daily basis or in response to abnormal events (Rikkerink, Verbeeten, Simons, & Ritzen, 2016).
13. *Shared leadership*—The acknowledgement of one or more assigned leaders. In some instances, these individuals will lead each other in search of fulfilling organizational goals or standards (Bolden, 2011).
14. *Situations*—Can be ordinary, daily, scheduled, or routine occurrences or they can be unusual, severe, or extreme happenings that create a demand for a response from school or district leadership (Spillane, 2006).

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research study along with some historical and theoretical information related to distributed leadership. The influence of distributed leadership on both education and our society at large are mentioned within the chapter. I shared my epistemological, ontological, axiological, and methodical belief systems that were evident in my conduct of this research. I also discussed my background and motivation for conducting such a study. I discussed the central research question and sub-questions that guided this study within this first chapter. I provided definitions to help guide readers who are not acquainted with the distributed leadership body of knowledge.

The study of distributed leadership can be a powerful tool as evidenced by the issues that were uncovered at Chicago elementary schools (Spillane, 2006). These issues, as well as others related to leadership, are occurring at the middle school level as well and there is the problem.

The purpose of this study was to discover the perceptions of middle school math, science, English, and social studies teachers regarding distributed leadership's influence on their area of teaching expertise. My hope was to add to the distributed leadership literature by revealing some of the problems that exist related to the inequitable treatment of different academic subjects at the middle school level. These problems can be related to the original distributed leadership study conducted by Spillane and his researchers where it was discovered that academic leaders were chosen by very different methods in math and language arts (Diamond & Spillane, 2016).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The theory of distributed leadership framed this study. Topics presented in Chapter Two include comparison of leadership principles, exploration of various roles within schools, and application of distributed leadership among several scenarios. The key person in school leadership, the principal, will be described. Teachers, assistant principals, and other stakeholders in the leadership of schools will also be mentioned. The influence of distributed leadership on individual academic subjects, overall school climate, and on different types of education, such as special education and teaching English in a multicultural and multilingual setting will also be explored. The pairing of distributed leadership with instructional leadership in order to tackle two of the more recent responsibilities of principals, instructional leadership and curriculum leadership, will also be mentioned.

Some of the other modern issues that principals and school leadership face, such as bullying and other forms of violence, will be examined from a distributed leadership viewpoint. Team building will be mentioned. Distributed leadership at the elementary, middle, and high school levels will be covered along with distributed leadership in higher education. Distributed leadership's ties to teacher leadership and teacher commitment will be presented. Competing leadership models along with localized and more personal leadership models are reviewed before the chapter closes with a summary.

Theoretical Framework

Distributed Leadership Theory

Distributed leadership theory was the theoretical framework for this study. Theorists such as Spillane (2006) and Gronn (2002) have contributed to the body of literature about

distributed leadership. Spillane (2006) said, “Distributed leadership is not a blueprint for doing school leadership more effectively. It is a way to generate insights into how leadership can be practiced more or less effectively” (p. 9-10). This study was not intended to add to distributed leadership theory but to look at the theory in action at the middle school level. The study was conducted with the intention of adding to the existing distributed leadership body of literature.

Distributed leadership shares concepts with co-leadership and shared leadership, which are mentioned even in pre-historic times (Bolden, 2011). Distributed leadership and its fundamental concepts—leaders, followers, situations, leadership practice, and situations—go well past the usual awareness of co-leadership and shared leadership advocates, who recognize that more than one person plays a role in leading an organization (Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership acknowledges a broad network of formal, informal, voluntary, and even involuntary actors who assume leadership roles (Spillane, 2005a). These roles can be within, outside, or even between schools depending on the size and composition of the leadership network (Harris, 2008; Piot & Kelchtermans, 2016).

Practices. The three theoretical pillars of distributed leadership are practices, interactions, and situations (Spillane, 2006). Of these three pillars, practices are the most important and foundational of the three concepts (Harris, 2013). Within distributed leadership, leadership practices are composed of leaders, followers, how they influence one another, and how the leadership initiatives of the organization are extended across the organization chart (Spillane, 2006).

Interactions. Interactions are the synergies between leaders and followers (Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership can be viewed as a lens, which serves as an analytical tool to focus on how influence moves to and fro between leaders and followers within these interactions

(Thorpe, Gold, & Lawler, 2011). These interactions are the catalysts that create leadership practices (Spillane, 2006).

Situations. Situations are the other catalyst that serve to create leadership practices within distributed leadership (Lahtero, Lang, & Alava, 2017). Situations can be normal, unusual, extreme, or possibly even dangerous workplace situations where leaders have to interact, make decisions, and generate leadership practices in response to the situation or event. Some situations that occur can be eliminated or alleviated by the previous creation of leadership practices (Spillane, 2006). An example would be a distributed leadership team working to implement legislation that prevents violence, bullying, or other potentially harmful events (Cron, 2016).

Distributed Perspective

Distributed leadership is more than just these three concepts. Theorists encourage researchers to take a distributed approach to their research or develop a distributed perspective of leadership where one recognizes that more than one leader exists within an educational organization (Spillane, 2006). Therefore, a distributed perspective is really a view of how leadership is distributed instead of looking at an organizational chart or the hierarchy of an entity or organization. This characterizing perspective focuses on the how of leadership distribution instead of why leadership is being distributed or what is actually being distributed (Timperley, 2005).

Leader-Plus Concept

Distributed leadership breaks from traditional leadership models in important ways such as the leader-plus concept. Most older, frequently-taught, and generally accepted theories of leadership hold that one person possesses the title of leadership, at the top of the organization,

and is the leader of the organization (Chatwani, 2017; Spillane & Orlina, 2005). The leader-plus concept of distributed leadership is about realizing that more than one person is assuming a leadership role within an organization (Spillane & Orlina, 2005). The focus of the leader-plus concept is the person in charge and everyone whom he or she has brought into the leadership team or those who have had leadership distributed to him or her (Spillane & Orlina, 2005). When a school's administration and teachers can break away from the one leader, hierarchical view of leadership, a distributed leadership framework can be developed and eventually achieved. As a distributed leadership framework is deployed, the school will become more collaborative, more leaders will emerge, and more man-hours will be focused on leadership initiatives than possible under the one leader in charge model (McBeth, 2008).

Other theorists have opposing views to the leader-plus concept of distributed leadership. They see distributed leadership as a different attitudinal approach to leadership and not the promotion of everyone into leadership (Chatwani, 2017). Their focus is the leader-follower paradigm, but from the viewpoint that professional and social interactions between the two are really the driving force of leadership and not the distribution of leadership as more traditional distributed leadership theorists advocate (Chatwani, 2017).

Distributed Leadership Theoretical Building Blocks

The distributed leadership model may not be as elaborate as other theory models, but has a sound theoretical framework supporting distributed leadership theory. Distributed cognition and activity theory are two of the foundational concepts within distributed leadership (Boylan, 2016; Ho, Chen, & Ng, 2016; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Distributed cognition is the distribution of thoughts, ideas, language, and beliefs from one person to another. Proponents of activity theory believe that mankind must be studied in motion and in concert with the

environment around them (Ho et al., 2016). These proponents believe those activities go a long way in defining mankind as people (Ho et al., 2016). Distributed leadership can be seen as the meshing of these two concepts, where the actual distribution of leadership and the sharing of leadership activities between people come together to form the model (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004).

Distributed Leadership in Education

Parents, teachers, principals, and other citizens within communities want to see schools improve. Different programs have been tried over the years with varying levels of success or failure. The field of education has given a lot of focus to instructional leadership, shared leadership, and collaborative leadership (Harris, 2014). Distributed leadership is seen by some as a combination of shared leadership and collaborative leadership, and like instructional leadership, focuses on improving teaching and learning. Therefore, distributed leadership can be seen as a good way to adopt systemic changes that improve instruction and student achievement (Harris, 2014).

The distributed leadership model in education focuses on actions and interactions between people in the schools rather than focusing on the position or title of principal or others (administrators, teachers, parents, local advocates, any leader or leaders) (Spillane et al., 2001). Distributed leadership looks at how a principal or other leaders communicate and distribute leadership to others in order to achieve the school's mission, as opposed to looking at what the principal is saying or what style of leadership he or she is using. This type of leadership model shows the level of trust the principal has for subordinates, the strength of professional relationships within the school, and the amount of collaboration that is taking place in order to accomplish leadership tasks (Spillane et al., 2001).

Distributed Leadership Gaps

Reading theoretical distributed leadership articles could lead someone to believe that everything within distributed leadership frameworks is perfect. The distributed leadership model and a distributed leadership framework offer many benefits, but many authors leave out the real sticking point: the implementation. Schools can enjoy the perceived benefits of distributed leadership, but organizational barriers, relational barriers, political barriers, and other unseen barriers have to be overcome to implement distributed leadership. Taking distributed leadership from this theory to actual implementation is a process that takes time, trust, and many workplace conversations about the direction in which leaders want to take the school (Harris, 2008).

A wide gap exists between the theory and the practice, which includes the implementation of a distributed leadership program (King & Stevenson, 2017; Youngs, 2009). The rationale behind distributed leadership implementation is often faulty as well and not rooted in fact-based reasoning (Youngs, 2009). Some of the literature would have the reader believe that once distributed leadership is implemented, principals and the teachers under them work in a state of mind where they are always on the same page and that teachers have free reign to implement leadership initiatives (King & Stevenson, 2017; Youngs, 2009). In reality, teachers generally work within preset boundaries and usually receive negative feedback from above when they step outside these boundaries (King & Stevenson, 2017).

Distributed leadership theory also does not take into account that not every teacher is a leader (Torrance, 2013a). Some teachers can be very good in the classroom and not be very good at leading or perhaps are not interested in leading. Some teachers became teachers solely to educate children and have no interest in the potential conflict situations or human resource functions that arise from having to counsel another teacher about improving his or her teaching

or leading skills (Mckenzie & Locke, 2014; Torrance, 2013a).

Linking the theoretical pieces that comprise distributed leadership to the real-world experiences of middle school teachers may illustrate the difficulties with implementation of distributed leadership including organizational barriers, political barriers, and relational barriers that slow or impede the distributed leadership program. The interviews with middle school teachers revealed how leadership is or is not being distributed in their school buildings. The interviews also showed how the individual teachers see themselves fitting in this theoretical framework.

Related Literature

A review of related literature provided information related to how distributed leadership has been implemented and used within the field of education. Related topics include distributed leadership in relation to different people, roles, and job positions within education. Another related topic is distributed leadership at different levels of education. Furthermore, distributed leadership as a solution to different problems within the field of education and as a solution to combatting certain societal ills that play themselves out in public schools are also related and reviewed in this section.

Shared Leadership vs. Distributed Leadership

Literature related to distributed leadership abounds and also plays an important role in the creation of the theoretical backbone of this study. Shared leadership and co-leadership are two theories that share a few common concepts with distributed leadership, but that is where the similarities end. The two theories are mistakenly used interchangeably throughout the literature (Spillane, 2005a). Shared leadership, like distributed leadership, recognizes that more than one person is responsible for leading a school (Spillane, 2005a). However, shared leadership looks at

the leadership activities of all of those involved as an aggregate (Spillane, 2005a). Distributed leadership on the other hand sees leadership as sort of like a cover being spread over top of the organizational chart and distributed throughout that covered network (Konradt, 2014).

Distributed leadership looks at the interactions among leaders as a network where leadership is distributed to others throughout the organization and is not concerned with an aggregation of leadership activities or events (Goksoy, 2016).

One problem that exists within the literature where these two theories are discussed is when authors use distributed leadership in the title of their article but refer to shared leadership throughout the article. Karriker, Madden, and Katell's article (2017) is a good example of this. They discussed team interactions and the benefits that shared leadership reaps from these interactions but used distributed leadership in the title of their article.

Distributed Leadership and the Principal

The principal has always been the most visible leader within each building in public schools. Leaders in that position have many responsibilities and roles to play. It would not be surprising to find out that principals have been looking for a long time for a way to delegate or shed some of these responsibilities. The principal is still the focal point within a distributed leadership framework except that the role he or she plays in leading the school is different (Botha & Triegaardt, 2015; Harris, 2012; Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz, & Louis, 2009). The principal in a distributed leadership framework is a change agent (Harris, 2012; Murphy et al., 2009). The principal must distribute leadership responsibilities to others, bring teachers and other stakeholders on board the leadership team, and break down the traditional system of heroic leadership (Harris, 2012).

In many cases, implementing a distributed leadership program or working within an

existing distributed leadership framework can mean big changes for the individual principals. These changes can entail a change in personal philosophy regarding education, adding or developing new skillsets with which to lead in this new framework, and potentially a new set of metrics with which to evaluate employees and improvement within their schools (Murphy et al., 2009). Maybe the toughest change of all is extinguishing existing beliefs regarding older, traditional styles of leadership (Botha & Triegaardt, 2015; Chatwani, 2017; Murphy et al., 2009).

Distributed leadership is a platform that principals can use to share responsibilities and bring more people into leadership, thereby creating a leadership team instead of bearing all of the leadership burden themselves (Carreno, 2018; Klar, Huggins, Hammonds, & Buskey, 2016; Larsen & Rieckhoff, 2014; Spillane, Camburn, & Pareja, 2007). The more inventive ways principals discover to distribute leadership within their schools can lead to the production of a library or catalog of ideas within the literature. Others within the field of education can potentially draw from these ideas and make their schools more effective as well (Larsen & Rieckhoff, 2014).

Two main groupings of skills are necessary for a principal and his or her leadership team to implement and build up a distributed leadership program within a school or school system (Carreno, 2018). These groups are technical skills and social skills (Carreno, 2018). Technical skills involve learning the theoretical aspects and the practical aspects of distributed leadership (Carreno, 2018). Social skills include getting teachers and other administrators involved with the leadership team, gaining buy in from as many employees and stakeholders as possible, getting along with others, working together, and making the program function well (Carreno, 2018). Once implemented, an appropriate method for principals to gauge their distribution of leadership is to keep track of the number of activities in which they are involved daily. Then, principals

should label each of these activities and look at the number of the activities where they are the sole leader and the number of the activities where they are not leading the activity (Spillane et al., 2007).

Currently, principals must distribute leadership in an attempt to build both leadership capacity and academic capacity within their schools (Klar et al., 2016). These efforts are being done with a focus on improving student learning (Klar et al., 2016). Principals are even being evaluated based on their ability to distribute leadership to other individuals and groups that create initiatives to improve student learning (TDOE, 2020b). Of important note is that without the principal being on board, any distributed leadership program or framework has little chance of succeeding or continuing in any form (Du Plessis & Eberlein, 2018).

One current topic in the global realm of education and in diverse school systems that can illustrate if a principal or how a principal is distributing leadership within his or her school is Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) (Kitchen, Gray, & Jeurissen, 2016). TESOL teachers are often part-time employees or consultants who are not brought into the leadership or sometimes even into the staff of a school (Kitchen et al., 2016). Spreading the network of distributed leadership out to include these teachers can bring with it the instructional leadership expertise that is found within the TESOL body of knowledge. This spreading offers the principal and the leadership team more opportunities and tools to include in the distributed instructional leadership program of their school (Kitchen et al., 2016).

Teacher Leadership

Distributed leadership is also often mistakenly used in place of the term *teacher leadership* (Kurt, 2016). Teacher leadership is a part of distributed leadership but only so far as

teachers willingly accept leadership roles (Tahir et al., 2016; Torrance, 2013a). “Distributed leadership involves more teachers in leadership roles in the school system to generate innovations with a strong team approach to run a school effectively” (Botha & Triegaardt, 2015, p. 422). Some teachers see distributed leadership as an empowering force for their leadership aspirations or roles, while others see it as a hindering force where professional development and other teaching-based skills are concerned (Kurt, 2016).

Wenner and Campbell (2017) revealed that teachers generally have two paths to reaching a leadership role: through more university education or through professional development. Making distributed leadership a part of that professional development seems to be a faster and more empowering way of bringing teachers into the leadership team than many more years of classes and seminars (Sales, Moliner, & Amat, 2017). Even other teachers within the school feel a sense of empowerment when a teacher or teachers become part of the leadership team as they feel they have someone being a voice for their needs (Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

If distributed leadership is implemented properly and maintained frequently, a system of leadership that includes teachers can be produced (Boylan, 2016). A school or school system would benefit from the leadership efforts of teachers across the academic spectrum (Boylan, 2016). This highly functioning system would be able to propagate itself, continue to bring new teachers onboard, and potentially continue to operate if the principal, superintendent, or other highly-placed leader were to leave (Boylan, 2016).

Teacher Education

Just as distributed leadership can play an influencing role in the delivery of education to students, it can also play a role in educating teacher-students. Including distributed leadership within teacher education programs at the university level is important. This inclusion could

alleviate some of the issues that individuals who transition from teacher to principal may have in acclimating themselves when they take over a school that has a distributed leadership program. Especially when these people are more accustomed to the traditional, heroic form of school leadership (Spillane, Harris, Jones, & Mertz, 2015).

Distributed leadership can play a role in the professional development education of teachers as well (Du Plessis & Eberlein, 2018). In a distributed framework, the selection of professional development for each teacher should be geared toward career advancement and the needs of the leadership team at the school (Du Plessis & Eberlein, 2018). Professional development is also more likely to happen or be authorized in a distributed framework where the principal and academic chairs work together as part of a leadership team, than in the traditional, heroic style of school leadership (Du Plessis & Eberlein, 2018).

Distributed Leadership and the Assistant Principal

Much of the distributed leadership literature focuses on the principal and teachers. Researchers focus on the perspectives of principals and teachers but neglect those of assistant principals (Botha & Triegaardt, 2015; Wan, Law, & Chan, 2018). Some distributed leadership models leave the assistant principal out altogether (Petrides, Jimes, & Karaglani, 2014). The assistant principal is beginning to be seen more from an instructional leadership point of view within other distributed leadership models and frameworks (Lochmiller & Karnopp, 2016; Petrides et al., 2014). Preparation for this role in a distributed leadership program should begin in teacher-student programs at universities and should be reinforced via professional development opportunities (Petrides et al., 2014). As some assistant principals are relegated to monitoring bus schedules and doing paperwork, it is important that this university education and professional development focus on more advanced technical and administrative training in order

to get assistant principals fully trained and able to fulfill these new roles that are forming within distributed leadership programs (Lochmiller & Karnopp, 2016).

Distributed Instructional Leadership

In many past cases, the principal has been seen as the manager of the school, the manager of teachers, and the dispenser of discipline. In current society, the role of the principal continues to grow as parents and society demand academic improvement, bullying and violence are continual threats, values and morals change, and technology races forward (Klar, 2012b). Modern principals have to assume all of the traditional roles, act as chief of security, and figure out how to improve student learning (Bredeson & Kelly, 2013; Halverson & Clifford, 2013). The fusion of distributed leadership with instructional leadership may just be the way of furthering student learning (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018; Bellibas & Liu, 2018; Halverson & Clifford, 2013; Klar, 2012a, 2012b).

Today's principals need to have a comprehensive skillset and be involved in many more departments' activities to be able to fill their job requirements and solve problems (Bredeson & Kelly, 2013). This expansion includes motivating teachers to do more, bringing teachers and others into the leadership team, and being insightful enough to understand great teaching, good teaching, and not-so-good teaching (Bredeson & Kelly, 2013). This growing list of responsibilities may even entail the principal being involved inside classrooms more often (Halverson & Clifford, 2013). In larger urban areas, seeing how the principal would need to greatly expand the members of the leadership team in order to improve learning for hundreds if not thousands of students, while managing the school and providing professional learning opportunities for teachers, is easy to see (Bredeson & Kelly, 2013).

One step a principal should take in building a distributed instructional leadership

framework is to distribute leadership to academic department chairs (Klar, 2012a, 2012b). This distribution would include appointing chairs where necessary, discussing instructional leadership goals with them, adding them to the leadership team of the school, and supporting them in words, deeds, and with the resources they need to improve instruction and learning (DeAngelis, 2013; Klar, 2012a, 2012b). This distribution would look much like Figure 1 from Klar (2012a).

Department Chair Instructional Leadership Capacity Development

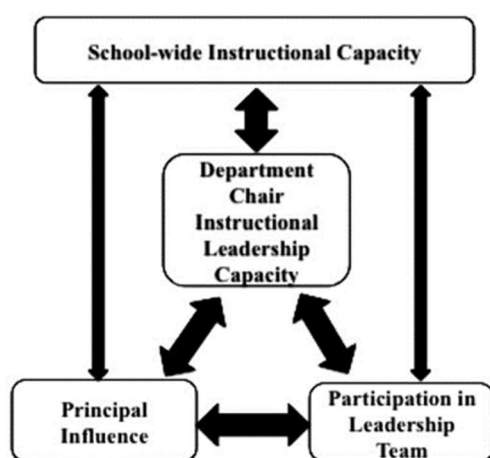


Figure 1. *Department chair instructional leadership capacity development.*

Reprinted from “Fostering Department Chair Instructional Leadership Capacity: Laying the Groundwork for Distributed Instructional Leadership,” by H. W. Klar, 2012, *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 15, p.180. Copyright 2012 by Taylor & Francis. Reprinted with permission by the publisher with display of website: <http://www.tandfonline.com> (see Appendix A).

Distributed instructional leadership works to improve learning for students, teachers, and the principals themselves (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018; Bellibas & Liu, 2018; Klar, 2012b). The combination of distributed leadership and instructional leadership also has a positive effect on

the overall climate of the school, which in turn has positive effects on student learning, and teacher job satisfaction (Bellibas & Liu, 2018). The implementation of these combined initiatives also helps to bring all of the leadership team members and other staff members into a shared view of what the mission and vision of the school should be (Klar, 2012b).

Professional skills that are lacking can be more easily identified when the principal brings others onto the leadership team. The team as a whole can analyze the needs of the school staff. Developmental courses and workshops can be provided to help teachers who may be content experts but lacking in delivery skills or in the necessary skills to help motivate students (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018; Klar, 2012a). When teachers develop or further build these skills, they can then help their students develop the necessary motivation and determination to study better and learn the material (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018; Klar, 2012a). Badenhorst and Radile, (2018) noted principals who get to see these events take place learn from these experiences and can use them in future situations as well. Badenhorst and Radile (2018) provided an illustration of what a distributed instructional framework may look like and provided more examples of some issues that may be solved via distributed instructional leadership (see Figure 2).

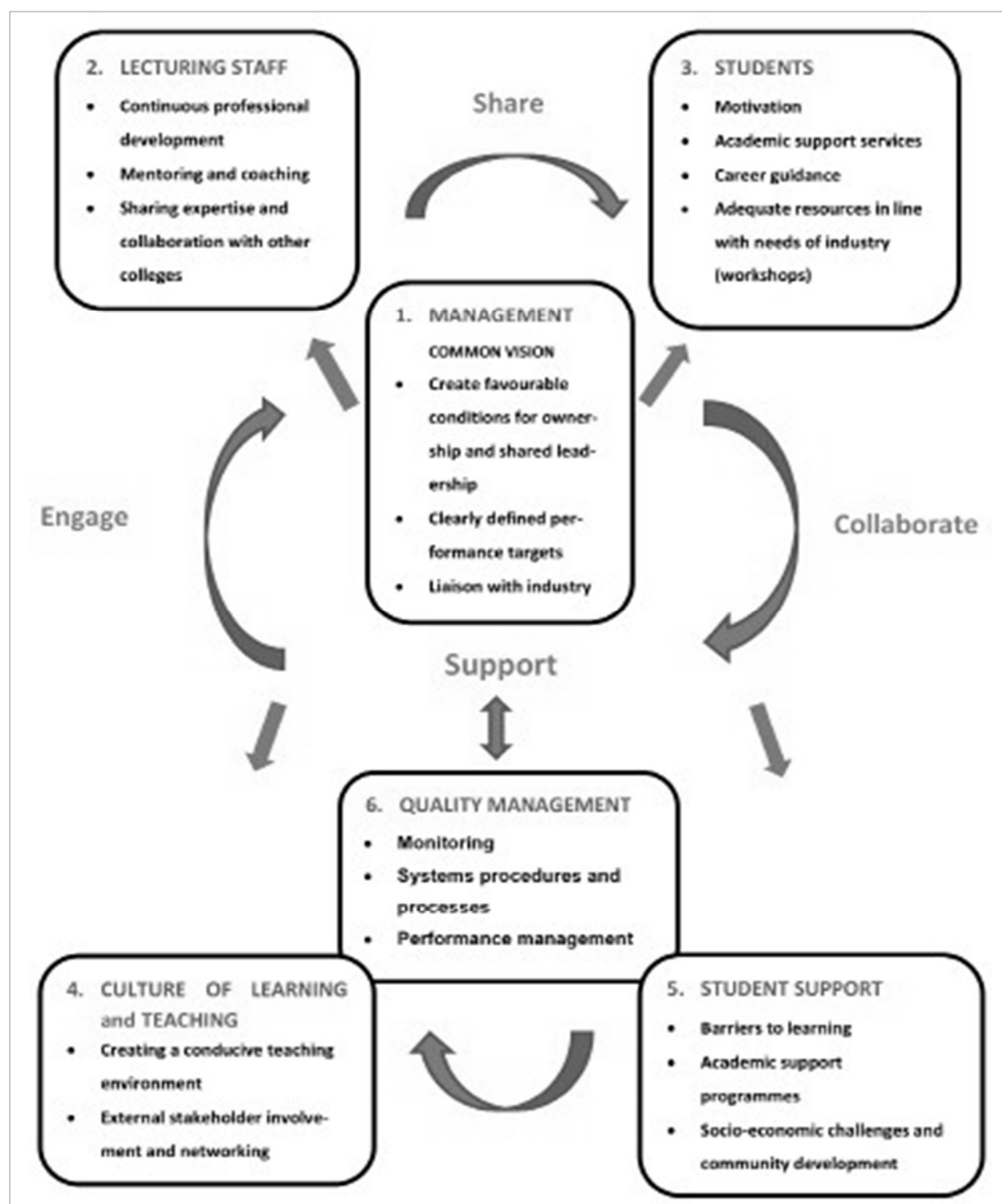


Figure 2. A distributed instructional framework.

Reprinted from “Poor Performance at TVET Colleges: Conceptualising a Distributed Instructional Leadership Approach as a Solution,” by J. W. Badenhorst and R. S. Radile, 2018, *Africa Education Review*, p. 18. Copyright 2018 by Unisa Press. Reprinted with permission by the publisher with display of website: <http://www.tandfonline.com> (see Appendix B).

One important aspect of instructional leadership that more traditional leadership models and older leadership literature treat as the sole responsibility of the principal is curriculum leadership (Gumus, Bellibas, Esen, & Gumus, 2018). Curriculum leadership is about developing an academic curriculum that is modern, diverse, and has a real-world link to which students can relate (Gumus et al., 2018). Curriculum leadership is an important aspect of instructional leadership that every principal should distribute throughout his or her staff by bringing as many voices to the table as possible in order to build the best curriculum that their school can deliver with the resources available (Gumus et al., 2018).

Distributed Leadership Among Teams

Formation of leadership teams is something that occurs within a distributed leadership framework (Feng, Hao, Iles, & Brown, 2017). Distributed leadership can be very effective in motivating teams and in the success of teams (Feng et al., 2017). Some aspects of distributed leadership are better at motivating teams than others (Feng et al., 2017). This is due in part to the composition of the teams (Feng et al., 2017). A team that has members who think more collectively will have greater success using distributed leadership than a group that is comprised of more individualistic thinking members (Feng et al., 2017; Ni, Yan, & Pounder, 2018). Also, leaders who recognize social relationships between team members and use those relationships for both team building and problem-solving opportunities are generally more successful than team leaders who do not (Feng et al., 2017).

The establishment of self-managed teacher teams is not only a sign of improvement efforts, but a sign that distributed leadership and some form of capacity building exists within a school at some level (DeFlaminis, Abjul-Jabbar, & Yoak, 2016). Principals who allow teams to discuss school issues, submit proposed solutions, and then accept and implement those solutions

not only distributes leadership to the team but helps to build a healthy and lasting team that will continue to produce results (DeFlaminis et al., 2016). Often, unstructured team meetings can be vehicles for some of the most inventive solutions to problems within the school, so there may not be a need for the principal or leadership team to create rules or guidelines for team members to follow in regards to these meetings (Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Myers, 2007).

Whether teams have been built, formally, informally, or not at all, some of the theories that have been generated regarding distributed leadership infer a certain level of teamwork. As mentioned before, Dr. Spillane was involved in generating terms such as collaborated distribution, collective distribution, and coordinated distribution (Diamond & Spillane, 2016). These methods of distribution are for groups of two or more people and infer that these groups are either working together in concert, in sequence, or interdependently (Spillane, Diamond, & Jita, 2003).

Distributed Leadership in Education

The first full scale attempt at implementing a distributed leadership program into a school district in the United States took place in Philadelphia in 2004 (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016). This program, The Annenberg Distributed Leadership Project, provided training related to developing a distributed mindset to principals and teachers (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016). Numerous articles were published that highlighted the positive effects of the program, including job satisfaction of teachers, leader efficacy, trust building between teacher team members, and elevated trust between teacher team members and their principals (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016).

The 5-year Annenberg project attracted a number of long-serving, senior faculty members who were still hungry to enact change in schools even after many years of service, which may be contrary to the beliefs of some who see long-tenured educators as being

comfortable in their spaces (Supovitz & Riggan, 2012). Many teachers are willing to learn new leadership concepts in the hopes of changing their school environment and improving student learning. Teachers have also been found to be very good at communicating new leadership concepts such as distributed leadership to other faculty members (Supovitz & Riggan, 2012).

Distributed Leadership and Teacher Commitment

Distributed leadership cannot solve every problem within the realm of education, but it should be used to focus in on some very important issues that plague school systems everywhere. Increasing rates of teacher attrition are creating educational, social, and economic problems (Martin & Mulvihill, 2016). Teachers leave the field for a variety of reasons: pay, benefits, stress, and many others. Distributed leadership could be influential where teacher attrition is concerned. Empowering teachers and bringing them aboard the leadership team could help to reduce the problem of teacher attrition (Ross, Lutfi, & Hope, 2016). This inclusion on the leadership team can also lead to a stronger commitment to the mission and goals of the school from the teachers (Adiguzelli, 2016; Ross et al., 2016).

As in most work situations, an employee's relationship with the boss can make the place a great place to work or a dreadful place to show up five days a week. Teachers' relationships with their principals are no different. This teacher-principal relationship has a large influence on the organizational commitment of teachers (Devos, Tuytens, & Hulpia, 2014). Distributed leadership can alleviate some of these problems by bringing more people into the leadership fold and give teachers more leaders with whom to discuss ideas and develop leadership relationships (Devos et al., 2014). This addition of leaders with whom to work and discuss issues can make the workplace a better place to be and motivate teachers not only to continue on with their instructional duties but to take on more responsibilities in the leadership and improvement

initiatives of the school overall (Devos et al., 2014).

Distributed Leadership and School Improvement

The distributed leadership literature often does not take into account the fact that not every principal or administrator knows how to distribute leadership to others nor is very good at selecting other leaders (Klar et al., 2016). Some principals ~~who~~ can do this naturally while others struggle. School districts that implement distributed leadership, in the hopes of improving their schools, need to train principals on the fundamentals of distributed leadership theory. This training will be useful as principals need to be able to better select other potential leaders, give them opportunities to lead, and also give them the time they need individually to complete the transformation from teacher to teacher-leader (Klar et al., 2016).

Often, the implementation of distributed leadership is driven from above and training is required across the organizational chart. In situations where training is not required, one way of helping teachers who is expressing dissatisfaction with their job or are feeling marginalized by differences of opinions with others at work is to encourage them to take distributed leadership training for any continuing education requirements that they may have (Sales et al., 2017). This training can help show individual teachers they do have a place within the school improvement enterprise that is being enacted within their building and can take less motivated employees and turn them around to be a driving force within the distributed leadership program that is directed at improving the school (Sales et al., 2017).

Diversity among teachers inside a school, including the schools where distributed leadership is being used or implemented, a point important to recognize (Heck & Hallinger, 2010). However, leaders should encourage people to think about the school as a whole instead of just their little corner of the school (Heck & Hallinger, 2010). This bigger way of thinking is

important in the capacity building aspect of distributed leadership style improvement within schools (Davison et al., 2014; Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Klar et al., 2016).

The capacity-building ability of a school is often an indicator of the school's ability to maintain a program geared toward change and improvement (Harris, 2004). Distributed leadership is looked upon in the literature as a potent catalyst for capacity-building (Davison et al., 2014; Heck & Hallinger, 2009). This capacity-building ability is seen as one of the links between distributed leadership and school improvement (Harris, 2004; Klar et al., 2016).

The distribution of leadership within a school can also become a network where learning is distributed as well (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009). In most hierarchical leadership paradigms, the person holding the title of leadership or management is in an ideal place to take advantage of further educational opportunities and some staff members may not receive those same or similar opportunities (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009). Within a distributed framework, however, both students and teachers are learners and teachers receive more opportunities for additional training or education that can further their careers (Liljenberg, 2015). These opportunities often lead to better commitment and satisfaction that relay to students and others within the school (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009).

Distributed Leadership and Student Learning

Many of the other topics studied and written about in relation to distributed leadership are important, but student learning is the focal point of all of them. The customer of the field of education, the student, must be the focus going forward. Distributed leadership can be used to improve many areas, but educating, building up, and making future leaders of students should always be the end goal (Klar et al., 2016).

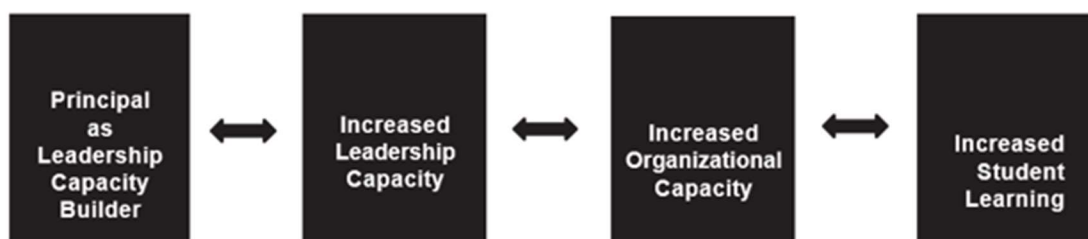
Distributed leadership cannot be implemented just by the principal stating that the school

is now utilizing it as the preferred leadership practice. Training, understanding, and the building of leadership structures to support such a program must be put into place (Woods, 2015).

Without proper training in and understanding of distributed leadership concepts, principals, teachers, and other stakeholders can use distributed leadership incorrectly and potentially cause some harmful organizational issues (Silcox, Boyd, & MacNeill, 2015). The leadership structures mentioned above are utilized to create a leadership network that encompasses the organization and brings as many people as possible or that are needed into the leadership circle, thereby increasing the number of people who are involved in leadership and the number of people that are focused on the overall learning by students (Woods, 2015).

While no study or researcher has been able to pinpoint exactly how the process of leadership building and capacity building takes place in a distributed leadership framework, it is believed that the principal is the key actor in the development of other leaders (Klar et al., 2016). This action by the principal leads to more leadership capacity, more organizational capacity, and therefore better uses of resources geared toward the learning of students (Klar et al., 2016).

Figure 3, taken from Klar et al. (2016) shows one theoretical model of the influence that the distribution of leadership by the principal has on the learning of students.



*Figure 3. Principal as leadership capacity builder framework. Reprinted from “Fostering the Capacity for Distributed Leadership: A Post-Heroic Approach to Leading School Improvement,” by H. W. Klar, K. S. Huggins, H. L. Hammonds, and F. C. Buskey, 2016, *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 19, p. 117. Copyright 2015 by Taylor & Francis. Reprinted with permission by the publisher with display of website: <http://www.tandfonline.com> (see Appendix C).*

Bullying and other Violent Actions

As mentioned earlier, some people see distributed leadership as a lens through which an organization can be examined. Using distributed leadership in this manner, allows closer examination of how leadership is distributed, how leaders interact, and which leaders interact (Cron, 2016). From there, leaders can determine what structural systems need to be put into place, not only to support the academic mission of the school, but also to respond to issues such as bullying, fighting, and potential criminal activity that may occur within a school or school system (Cron, 2016). The importance of these issues should make distributed leadership something that any potential school leaders would want to consider putting into their toolkit.

Distributed leadership can be the means by which underperforming schools, poorly resourced schools, and schools that are plagued with violence and delinquency manage to retain teachers (Torres, 2019). Teachers who are active in policy creation and implementation, who

feel a sense of responsibility beyond their classrooms, and who sense the support of school leadership are more likely to stay in their positions even in schools that present difficult challenges (Torres, 2019). Retaining teachers and improving student achievement are two important benefits of incorporating student discipline into the distributed leadership program of a school (Torres, 2019).

Distributed Leadership and Special Education

As noted previously, distributed leadership is similar to a web being spread throughout an organization with more and more people brought into the leadership framework as the web spreads across the organization. One aspect of a school that runs parallel to distributed leadership is special education (Miskolci, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2016). Schools that utilize inclusion help their own distributed leadership program by bringing those special education teachers and students under the distributed leadership umbrella, or in the case where a school is adding a special education initiative, the new department can be designed in a way that reflects the already active distributed leadership framework to more easily fit into the existing school leadership program and overall school culture (Fuller, Parsons, MacNab, & Thomas, 2013; Miskolci et al., 2016). Schools that do not utilize inclusion cannot fully envelop the special education department into its distributed leadership framework (Miskolci et al., 2016).

Distributed leadership can also be used as a managerial tool in the realm of special education (Fuller et al., 2013). Some special education programs deputize parents as leaders or managers within the program to make certain their children are receiving the education and care that is needed (Fuller et al., 2013). These programs can also use distributed leadership concepts to bring community members and leaders into the program who can provide resources that the school system could otherwise not afford (Fuller et al., 2013). This action of bringing in

community members to supply needed resources also helps to expose others to the special needs community and thereby helps to achieve some of the important goals of special education, which are social equality, acceptance, and normative interactions with others outside the special education community (Fuller et al., 2013; Miskolci et al., 2016).

Distributed Leadership and Math Achievement

The influence of distributed leadership on different academic subjects , whether positive or negative, should be evaluated and these noted influences should be shared with other educational practitioners. Traditional educational leadership has varied effects on academic achievement. Educational leadership appears to be a much stronger catalyst in early and elementary education than at other levels (Karadag, Bektas, Cogaltay, & Yalcin, 2015). Leadership can also have different influences on different academic subjects (Northwestern University, 2017a; Spillane & Diamond, 2007). Leadership can have no influence on some subjects and strong influences on other subjects (Karadag et al., 2015).

Distributed leadership, however, has direct effects on academic capacity (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). Academic capacity increases and decreases with the level of distributed leadership that is existent in elementary schools (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). Academic capacity has direct effects on math learning and achievement via the improved perceptions of the school by both teachers and students (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). Therefore, distributed leadership has indirect effects on math learning and improvement (Heck & Hallinger, 2009).

Distributed Leadership at the Early Childhood and Elementary School Level

Children's education begins at home before they ever walk into a school building. However, early childhood facilities or elementary schools can be the very first and very important educational step in the lives of some children. The leaders and teachers within these

institutions recognize the importance of the building blocks they are laying down in the foundation of their students' education. Often, these leaders and teachers are among the best at using distributed leadership tools (Kangas, Venninen, & Ojala, 2016; Wan et al., 2018).

Principals, leaders, and mentors at this level partner well to develop policy and goals (Kangas et al., 2016). Teachers and other practitioners at this level work well in teams in order to further the educational attainment of their students (Kangas et al., 2016; Wan et al., 2018).

Some of the more experienced and more talented leaders at this educational level who see the potential benefits of distributed leadership seem to make a more concerted effort to implement distributed leadership within their buildings (Tashi, 2015; Torrance, 2013b). These leaders, through their experience, can see potential benefits and real-time issues with distributed leadership implementation and everyday functioning of the program, but are able to work through many of these issues (Torrance, 2013b). These leaders are often able to negotiate a compromise with both teachers and other leaders when they encounter any theoretical shortcomings within distributed leadership (Torrance, 2013b).

Differences among perceptions of leadership, policy, and programs are common for teachers and leaders at this educational level (Dennee & Thornton, 2018). This gap between viewpoints can create situations where the principal can be blind to issues that need to be resolved or to underperforming areas of the school (Dennee & Thornton, 2018). However, building solid work relationships and bringing teachers onto the leadership team are steps that a leader can take to bridge those gaps between viewpoints, make the school a better place to work, and empower early childhood educators (Dennee & Thornton, 2018).

Distributed Leadership at the Middle School Level

Principals, administrators, and teachers at the middle school level are under more

pressure than ever before (Grenda & Hackmann, 2014; O'Donovan, 2015). These pressures can be parental, societal, political, and more (Al-Harthi & Al-Mahdy, 2017; O'Donovan, 2015). The changes in society from television to social media, changes in values, and other influences can turn a middle school building into a pressure cooker. Distributing leadership can be a successful solution to alleviating some of this pressure and improving instructional learning (O'Donovan, 2015). Middle school leaders can distribute this leadership to staff members and even to the school's volunteer network (Angelle, 2010; O'Donovan, 2015). Bringing a volunteer network of parents into the building can have a calming effect on some students and help in accomplishing the growing number of tasks with which principals are charged in comparison to principals of previous generations (O'Donovan, 2015).

Other literature regarding distributed leadership at the middle school level shows that teachers see themselves fitting into instructional leadership roles within a distributed leadership framework (Grenda & Hackmann, 2014; Williams, 2013). Middle school teachers see time for reflective practices and instructional planning as key support mechanisms for their instructional roles (Williams, 2013). The teachers also see themselves as important communicators who relay information and provide professional development to other faculty members within a distributed leadership platform (Klein et al., 2018; Williams, 2013).

The middle school level is an area within the literature that lags behind other school levels. Many more studies and articles about distributed leadership at the elementary, high school, and college levels exist than at the middle school level. Williams (2013) asked four research questions in his middle school level study of distributed leadership, yet acknowledged 11 questions in all (Williams, 2013). The current study expanded upon Williams's (2013) work.

Distributed Leadership in High Schools

Just as societal factors can influence middle schoolers negatively and create some pressure situations for middle school leadership, high schools have an even more plentiful and diverse catalog of events that can happen. High school leaders have concerns about dropouts, teen pregnancy, school violence, and shootings, along with the standard concerns about grades, learning, and moving on toward college (Halverson & Clifford, 2013; Malin & Hackmann, 2017a, 2017b). Leaders at the high school level need to use distributed leadership as a lens to view situations and try to plan ahead to fend off potential problems (Halverson & Clifford, 2013).

These leaders need to look at examples from distributed leadership programs at other high schools to find out what worked elsewhere (Halverson & Clifford, 2013). With numerous different issues to deal with at the high school level, taking on each issue or potential issue from the ground up would be very time consuming for the leadership team. “Effective principals empower others so that leadership functions are not exclusive to those in formal administrative positions” (Malin & Hackmann, 2017a, p. 56). This distribution of leadership can help to tackle some of these multiple issues that arise.

Distributed Leadership in Higher Education

In general, college campuses are much larger than public elementary, middle, and high schools, and more students and educators are on college campuses. Distributed leadership at the university or college level can be seen as a compilation of individual leadership efforts and collaborative leadership efforts (Jones, 2014). Students, staff, and professors can be exposed to many more leaders in this environment (Jones, 2014). They can also encounter more individual skillsets and approaches to leadership by distributing leadership throughout campus (Jones,

2014). This distribution across campus can lead to a better comprehension of leadership efforts and encourage collaboration (Sewerin & Holmberg, 2017).

As universities become larger and more academic programs are offered, the university system becomes a more complex network to be managed. Distributed leadership offers a way to grow leadership as the university grows. Perhaps, distributed leadership can be effective among online programs as well (Holt, Palmer, Gosper, Sankey, & Allan, 2014; Jones & Harvey, 2017; Jones, Harvey, Lefoe, & Ryland, 2014). Distributed leadership can also be seen as a subsystem within the overall system on campuses as different academic departments can develop very strong distributed leadership efforts within their own departments that are separate from or complimentary to the overall campus-wide leadership efforts (Hawkes, Johansson, & McSweeney, 2017)

Implementing distributed leadership within the realm of higher education in the United States, Japan, or other more populous countries is a large undertaking. Smaller nations, however, have the opportunity to distribute leadership across the universities and colleges within their boundaries via one initiative (Sharma et al., 2017). Their smaller populations offer the ability to train everyone at once either in person or online and begin the distributed leadership process immediately. This model of implementation among smaller populations would be true of smaller state initiatives in the United States or prefectural initiatives in Japan where national projects would be overwhelming and next to impossible (Sharma et al., 2017).

Institutions of higher learning can be seen as a system of inputs and outputs. Tax dollars, tuition, grants, and charitable contributions come in (Jones et al., 2017). Graduates, research, published articles, public policies, and more go out (Jones et al., 2017). Distributing leadership across the entire higher education enterprise via cross-departmental collaborations is becoming

more attractive and can be a way of improving the university, reacting to ever-changing academic demands, and maintaining a disciplined campus (Floyd & Fung, 2017; Jones et al., 2017).

Emerging, Local, and Competing Models

Interpersonal leadership. Distributed leadership is not the only leadership model in practice. One other model is interpersonal leadership, which is solidly grounded in the body of leadership literature (Lamm, Carter, & Lamm, 2016). Like distributed leadership, interpersonal leadership recognizes the importance of interactions between people as a key function in leading an organization (Lamm et al., 2016; Spillane, 2006). Interpersonal leadership could help to inform distributed leadership and bolster one of distributed leadership's theoretical pillars: interactions. Unlike distributed leadership though, interpersonal leadership does not have a sound theoretical model (Lamm et al., 2016).

New college graduates lack the necessary interpersonal skills to move up quickly in an organization. With this in mind, they also likely lack the skills to interact effectively with coworkers. Lamm et al. (2016) said there is no step-by-step recommendation to be found that tells someone how to gain these skills. Therefore, new hires in the field of education start out at a disadvantage when they enter into the field after graduation and are soon working in a school that has either an interpersonal leadership model or a distributed leadership program in place.

According to Bass and Bass (2008), a leadership model does not need to be complex. Bass and Bass (2008) said, "A simple model of leadership may be a list of different types of leaders grouped according to one or more characteristics about them." According to the statement of Lamm et al. (2016) about interpersonal leadership not having a sound theoretical model, this very simple model described by Bass and Bass is therefore a worthy competing

model since it possesses a valid model.

Transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is another model that is deeply rooted in leadership literature with over 30 years of theoretical structure building and the collection of best practices being the two activities that are most often performed (Sun, Chen, & Zhang, 2017). The three pillars of transformational leadership are (a) the personal qualities of the leader, (b) the structure or features of the organization itself, and (c) the characteristics possessed by the leader's colleagues (Sun et al., 2017). Transformational leadership is one of the most often studied leadership models that was generated to work both inside and outside of educational contexts (Sun et al., 2017).

Redesigning the organization, developing people, setting directions, and managing instructional programs are the four most common practices within transformational leadership (Sun et al., 2017). Distributed leadership has a much more open-minded view of leadership practices. Spillane (2006) defined leadership practice as being “generated in the interactions of leaders, followers, and their situation; each element is essential for leadership practice” (p.4). This view of leadership practices allows for different practices to be generated in multiple situations rather than listing practices that leaders perform.

Transactional leadership. Another leadership model that is used both inside and outside the realm of education is transactional leadership. This leadership model suggests that someone gets paid or gains something in exchange for performing a task. This model also focuses on leaders and followers but the people in those roles are primarily teachers and students (Khan, 2017). This model is obviously not as extensive as other models including distributed leadership.

With the increasing number of industries in the world, access to data at our fingertips via

the Internet, and the continual development of new leadership research, the generation of more localized and individualized leadership models is possible. David Marquet learned in the Navy that when he was in charge his followers would do what he said no matter how absurd his orders were (Fernandez-Salvador, Oney, Song, & Camacho, 2017). He recognized the absurdity of this. He also realized that the traditional leader-follower model of leadership meant that the leader was responsible and that the follower did as he or she was told. Marquet developed his own leadership model in response: Intent-Based Leadership (IBL). IBL was implemented by Marquet in the field of medicine and was used by Marquet to assign responsibility to his subordinates not just give out orders (Fernandez-Salvador, Oney, Song, & Camacho, 2017). Moving forward, educational practitioners may develop the same personalized and local models that could compete with distributed leadership.

Summary

Distributed leadership can be a very powerful tool if used correctly. This chapter began with the theoretical framework for the study which is distributed leadership theory. The three pillars of distributed leadership were explained: leadership practices, interactions, and situations. It is essential to understand this theoretical framework and the three pillars of distributed leadership in order to implement and use distributed leadership correctly in the field.

One study of distributed leadership by James Spillane and others has shown that math and language arts are treated very differently at the elementary level (Diamond & Spillane, 2016). School leaders may even look for math leadership outside of their walls rather than developing it from within (Sherman, 2005). This external search for math leadership could be due to a lack of math expertise on the part of school leaders, being uncomfortable or even afraid of certain mathematical concepts, or perhaps a lack of a sound professional relationship with

their employees within the math department in their schools. However, Heck and Hallinger (2009) determined that distributed leadership has indirect effects on math improvement. They were unable to discover day-to-day leadership practices that affected math improvement but did acknowledge the benefits of distributed leadership in increasing academic capacity and improving math learning (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). This piece of literature is an example of why distributed leadership should play a bigger role inside a school building and could alleviate some of the unfair practices exhibited towards one subject or another.

How distributed leadership influences math, science, social studies, and English at the middle school level is a gap within the literature that needs to be explored. Interviews with teachers who describe their experiences with distributed leadership and how leaders within each subject area are identified need to be conducted much like the original distributed leadership study (Diamond & Spillane, 2016). The interviews should also elicit how distributed leadership influences school climate and how distributed leadership influences individual academic subjects within different schools in the same district (Diamond & Spillane, 2016; Spillane, 2005b)

The body of literature addressing distributed leadership contains both theoretical and research weaknesses. First, theoretical articles related to distributed leadership are lacking when compared to studies addressing other leadership theories. This lack of theoretical support can leave some readers guessing as to what distributed leadership really is as the definition or definitions of distributed leadership are not common, everyday concepts to readers.

Secondly, while research into distributed leadership has focused on a diverse range of topics, there is not a lot of depth of research in any one sphere including the middle school level. Also, more qualitative studies need to be performed that ask more questions and perform more detailed interviews with more people that are involved in leading schools. More voices need to

be heard related to what works and what does not work within the realm of distributed leadership. Hopefully, this study will add important findings and encourage others to investigate and research distributed leadership at the middle school level and elsewhere.

Gaps exist in the literature related to distributed leadership where teacher leadership and instructional leadership are concerned. Neumerski (2012) pointed out that instructional leadership articles and research are broken down by the focus on principals, teachers, and coaches or instructional specialists. She described that none of those three types of leaders act in isolation from one another inside the school building and should not be studied separately in print if real scenarios are to be studied and real solutions to be developed. Neumerski's very astute judgement needs to be taken into consideration by future writers and researchers alike.

A multitude of angles and approaches await future distributed leadership researchers. Distributed leadership and gifted education would be a great place to start. At least someone has tackled the unsavory topic of bullying from a distributed point of view and hopefully future studies of bullying and violence will help to keep students and employees alive and well (Cron, 2016).

Distributed leadership faces competition from other leadership models that are solidly entrenched in the leadership literature. Other localized and personalized models of leadership that are not widely known can also compete with distributed leadership in different areas. The growth of the leadership body of knowledge along with better access to information via the Internet and technology also poses a threat to distributed leadership as other competing models are sure to be developed in the future and may be under development now. As more people like David Marquet could enter the field of education in the future, the possibility exists that some of these people may use their past experiences to walk away from leadership fallacies or models

that they perceive as not working, generate their own model, and implement it into their respective workplaces.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This nested-case study was conducted to investigate the perceptions of middle school teachers as to how distributed leadership influences the subject they teach including math, science, social studies, and English. This study consisted of interviews with 14 middle school teachers in McCullough County, direct observation of a faculty meeting, and the analysis of documentation pertaining to distributed leadership. This chapter describes the design, setting, participants, data collection, data analysis, and other important points within the conduct of the study. The chapter also provides the research questions, interview questions, and the procedures that I used to conduct the study so the study can be replicated by other researchers.

This chapter also provides my view of what my role was in this study. The chapter covers steps I took to ensure the trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the data generated by the study. The chapter also covers the ethical considerations I employed while conducting this study.

Design

This nested-case study was a qualitative study in which I elicited stories from teachers via interviews and told those stories in the findings and discussion sections of the research. Qualitative research investigates a concept in its natural setting, draws descriptions from participants who experience the concept in that natural setting, and describes these experiences for the reader (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). A qualitative research methodology was appropriate for this study as I investigated distributed leadership in middle schools, elicited responses from participants regarding their experiences with distributed leadership, and described these experiences for the readers of the study.

One design for qualitative research is the case study. Yin (2014) defined a case study as a research method that:

Copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result, relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result, benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (p. 17)

This case study was nested because I conducted interviews at multiple middle schools within the same county school district. No one middle school in my area, outside of the three school districts that rejected my requests to perform research, nor in McCullough County is large enough to provide an adequate sample of teachers, so I had to interview teachers at multiple schools in order to have enough participants to make this a valid study. Originally, this seemed like a difficult task, but the six trips I made to Tennessee, the 4,000 plus miles, and the more than 60 hours behind the wheel produced 14 interviews, which made this a valid qualitative study.

Besides being a nested-case study, this case study was also single, holistic, and explanatory. I did not take the results of one case and see if I could replicate them (Yin, 2014). The case was holistic as I only had one unit of analysis: the perceptions of middle school teachers in one school district and an observation of their interaction with other leaders within a school. The observed interactions are a key component of distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006). This case study was also explanatory, as the data from the interviews were rich and robust with participants' explanations of the impact of distributed leadership on the subjects they teach. A different research design utilizing a survey would not have elicited the robust nature of the explanatory data (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The case study design was also appropriate for this study because I dealt with multiple aspects of distributed leadership (Yin, 2014). I selected the case study method because I wanted both to learn what is going on with distributed leadership in the field at the middle school level and to understand the perceptions that middle school teachers have regarding the influence of distributed leadership on the subject areas they teach. I have read through many studies from other educational levels. I have read through many studies from other educational levels, because a gap in the literature exists with the lack of distributed leadership studies performed at the middle school level. Some of the studies I read from the middle school level were not extensive, with limited sample sizes and limited scope in the interview questions (Williams, 2013).

Frederic Le Play created numerous methodological tools in the early 1800s that are used in research designs including field research (Freemantle, 2017). Many professions and academic disciplines utilize case study research (Yin, 2014). “A case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (Yin, 2014, p. 2).

Research Questions

Central Research Question

How do middle school teachers describe the aspects of distributed leadership they encounter (Spillane, 2006)?

Sub-Question 1

How do middle school teachers describe the interactions of leaders and followers in their schools (Spillane, 2006)?

Sub-Question 2

How do middle school teachers describe the workplace situations that have served as catalysts for the generation of new leadership practices in their schools (Spillane, 2006)?

Sub-Question 3

How do middle school teachers describe their roles within the leadership teams of their schools (Spillane, 2006)?

Setting

I conducted this nested-case study at six middle schools in McCullough County. Although principals at eight schools approved my study, no teachers at three of the schools volunteered to participate. This county was chosen because of its large number of middle schools which provided an adequate sample size for the research. My original goal was to do 16 interviews and do two observations in each school that granted permission to conduct research. However, the county where I live in West Virginia and the two nearest counties with an adequate number of middle schools all rejected my request to perform research. I drove to Tennessee six times to conduct interviews. I was approximately two-thirds of the way to Tennessee on another trip when one of the two teachers with whom I had an appointment that day emailed to let me know that she was sick and stayed home. Approximately 45 minutes later, on that same trip, the other teacher emailed to reschedule so I turned around and drove back to West Virginia. Altogether, I drove over 4,000 miles and spent more than 60 hours behind the wheel of my car in order to conduct the interviews and faculty observation for this study.

The county in which I conducted this study is one of only several counties in Appalachia that have enough middle schools to provide a sufficient number of participants to make this a valid qualitative study. McCullough County is similar to other counties in Appalachia with large

rural areas within the county and one more populated area.

I contacted the county school district's office where Ms. Dotson informed me of the process to gain approval to conduct research. I completed and submitted the necessary paperwork, sent it in, and about a month later, the research committee of McCullough County Schools voted on my application. After gaining permission from the committee to perform research, I contacted the principals of each of the 16 middle schools in the county, eight of whom gave me permission to conduct research in their schools. All 14 of the interviews were conducted at the respective schools of each teacher participant. The faculty meeting observation I conducted was at one of the eight middle schools that approved the study and the distributed leadership policy documents and other associated documentation were obtained from the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) website.

Site 1 Herman Melville Middle School

Herman Melville Middle School is a large middle school in northern McCullough County. Lucille Dove is the principal of this school. The school is in a more rural setting than the other middle schools in McCullough County. While the school is located in a rural area, it is by far the largest middle school building with the largest overall campus including athletic fields, that I have ever seen. A couple of the other schools in McCullough County rival Herman Melville Middle in physical size but are much older buildings than this newer facility and large campus.

Site 2 William Faulkner Middle School

William Faulkner Middle School is a small middle school in southern McCullough County. Steve Morizio is the principal of this school. This school is also in a rural area of McCullough County. The tree-lined streets, parking lots, and walkways on the campus of this

school could easily make one daydream about any of the writers I have used as pseudonyms for this school and others.

Site 3 Zora Neale Hurston Middle School

Zora Neale Hurston is a large, urban middle school located in the inner city within McCullough County. Daniel Laney is the principal of this school. Just over 1,000 students attend Zora Neal Hurston Middle School.

Site 4 Ernest Hemingway Middle School

Ernest Hemingway Middle School is a small middle school in McCullough County. Todd Emmerich is the principal of this school. The school is located in an area of western McCullough County that has a very diverse population.

Site 5 Carson McCullers Middle School

Carson McCullers Middle School is a small middle school in McCullough County. Mark Mansell is the principal of this school. The school is located at a crossroads within the southern part of McCullough County where a broad mix of demographics and socio-economic realities meet. Between 2009 and 2016, I traveled to McCullough County for work between 60 and 70 times and never knew until showing up at this school that such a diverse area existed within the county.

Site 6 James Fenimore Cooper Middle School

James Fenimore Cooper Middle School is a small, inner city school located within McCullough County. With just under 400 students, the school has a surprisingly diverse student body. Sally Medlock is the principal of this school.

Site 7 John Steinbeck Middle School

John Steinbeck Middle School is a large rural school located within the eastern part of

McCullough County. Stephen Strowbridge is the principal of this school. This school is likely the least diverse of all the middle schools in McCullough County, Tennessee.

Site 8 F. Scott Fitzgerald Middle School

F. Scott Fitzgerald Middle School is another large middle school in the eastern part of McCullough County. Ray Sutherland is the principal of this school. This school also lacks diversity within the student body, but not to the degree of John Steinbeck Middle School.

Participants

I strategically used purposeful sampling procedures to provide 14 participants who were middle school teachers within McCullough County (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbin, 2015). From the large pool of middle school teachers within the county, I hoped the participants would be a minimum of four math teachers, four social studies teachers, four science teachers, and four English teachers. I ended up garnering five ELA teachers, four social studies teachers, four science teachers, and one math teacher. Purposeful sampling is the process of choosing a group of participants who can provide information regarding the phenomenon being investigated via the research (Creswell, 2013). Purposeful sampling was appropriate for this study as it allowed me to find the 14 participants who could provide the rich, descriptive data required of qualitative research and in this case, data related to the topic being studied (Gentles et al., 2015). Purposeful sampling is most often associated with the case study method in texts about qualitative research (Gentles et al., 2015).

Demographic information regarding the participants is provided in narrative and tabular form (see Table 1). Pseudonyms were provided for these participants. Pseudonyms were also used for principals, superintendents, the school district and anyone else or any other place mentioned by any of the participants who were interviewed.

Procedures

I began by gaining approval from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct this research (see Appendix D). To gain approval I contacted the office of Mr. Clagg who is the Superintendent of McCullough County Schools. Ms. Dotson, who is Mr. Clagg's secretary, informed me of the process to gain approval to conduct research. I filled out the necessary application paperwork and submitted it to the research committee of McCullough County Schools. The committee voted to approve my study and I included this approval letter with my IRB application packet.

After Liberty University's IRB gave me full approval, I then contacted the principals at each middle school twice in order to gain permission to interview teachers who worked for them within the six schools where interviews were conducted. I did not conduct interviews at two of the schools that approved me. When principals gave me permission to conduct research in their schools, I began contacting social studies, English, math, and science teachers. The first principal who approved me directed the school secretary to provide me with the email addresses of math, science, English, and social studies teachers. The other principals let me know their staff was too busy to provide me with a list of the target group of teachers that I needed. I already knew the email pattern for McCullough County Schools, so I contacted the target group of teachers at the other seven schools by looking at the contact list on each school's website and using their first name, dot, last name to generate their respective email addresses. After contacting each teacher twice via email, thirteen teachers replied to my email to set up times for interviews and one teacher called my cell phone to set up a time. I offered \$25 VISA gift cards for participating in the study.

Before conducting any interviews with teachers, I searched the Tennessee Department of

Education website for documentation pertaining to distributed leadership. After finding five of these documents, I conducted semi-structured interviews, which were recorded, with teachers who agreed to be participants within the schools where principals gave me permission to conduct research. I analyzed these documents that I found on the TDOE website after conducting interviews and a faculty observation. I had to submit my interview questions with my application to perform research to McCullough County's Research Committee. After my application was approved, I did not deviate from the interview questions. I did allow teachers to ask questions for better clarification and answered those questions as best I could. I masked the identity of the participants using pseudonyms.

After I conducted interviews, observed a faculty meeting, reviewed documentation, made meaningful entries into my research journal and observation journal, I transcribed the 14 interviews and research journal entries (see Appendices E & F). I then coded the major categories and themes within the data from my research using reading and memoing (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I painstakingly listened to interviews multiple times looking for phrases or words that repeated and read the journal entries that I made much the same way. I made notes in my journal that defined the entries as factual or generated from my own thoughts and opinions to try to bracket out any preconceived notions or beliefs on my part.

I contacted one of the principals that approved my research about observing a faculty meeting as I neared the completion of the 14 interviews. Principal Zawada gave me permission to observe a faculty meeting at his school and emailed a schedule of the meetings for that semester. I arrived early for the meeting and had a few minutes to discuss the observation with him. He provided a short overview of his tenure at the school and let me know the agenda for the meeting. The notes that I made about this observation can be found in Appendix G.

After transcribing the 14 teacher interviews, I emailed each to the respective participant for member checking and asked if the transcript was accurate, or if the participant would like to change or add anything. I emailed each one to the participants and asked if they were correct or if the teacher would like to change or add anything so they could review them as part of the member checking procedure. I also had this data reviewed by a peer. Alice Hernandez is a middle school teacher who has previously taught at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels at four schools in Illinois, and is now in her seventh school, a middle school in South Carolina. She read my paper, reviewed the data, and reviewed the results (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I am keeping hard copy data and documentation in a locked file cabinet for three years (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Electronic data is being stored on my password-protected home computer (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I am going to keep all of this data for a minimum of three years (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The Researcher's Role

My role as a researcher within this study was to elicit rich descriptions from the participants regarding their experiences with distributed leadership, whether distributed leadership influenced the academic subject they teach, or if it influenced who is placed on the principal's leadership team. After that was completed satisfactorily, my role changed to that of journalist as I needed to transcribe the interviews, read and listen to interviews, search for common themes, present those themes, and tell the stories of these teachers.

As the human instrument in this study, I believe my impact was twofold. First, as someone who has never experienced distributed leadership within an educational context, I made every effort to be as judicious and unbiased as possible. I did not attempt to influence the data or distort any of the findings or try to lead any of the participants in a direction I wanted them to go.

Secondly, I told the participants' story in my study. Some of these teachers are in situations where they cannot openly discuss some of these issues and I wanted to air the issues out and bring them to the forefront, while keeping the identities of the teachers confidential.

I was the only researcher and interviewer for this study. I have never worked in the field of education. My undergraduate and graduate degrees were not in education. I have no relationship with any of the teachers whom I targeted to be participants for this study. I believe my detachment from the field was a benefit to the study as I needed some of the interviewees to clarify many points for my own understanding and these requests for clarification elicited more rich data that made the stories of these teachers more understandable and more interesting.

Data Collection

Interviews, an observation, and document analysis were the only three data collection procedures used for this study. I located TDOE documents that pertained or included distributed leadership, conducted the interviews, observed a faculty meeting, and then analyzed the documentation related to distributed leadership. I chose this sequence because I wanted to speak to the teachers first and have some data with which to work. I used the observations and document analysis to double check some of the data from the interviews. I did not find that the data I developed from the observations and document analysis were in conflict with the data from the interviews. If that would have occurred, I would have asked for follow-up interviews with teachers whose answers conflicted with the findings of these two subsequent data collection methods. Fortunately, no follow up interviews were required.

Interviews

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) defined an interview as a sharing of views related to a single topic by two individuals. I conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with the

middle school teachers on the campus of the school where each works (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). I was willing to interview the participants at a site near their respective campuses, but this was not necessary as each teacher felt comfortable doing the interviews at their schools. I worked around their schedules and my own by taking vacation days and driving to Tennessee to get all of the interviews conducted and recorded. I transcribed the interviews after all 14 had been conducted.

Open-ended interview questions. The following questions were posed to each of the 14 participants within this study. The interview questions were developed from the research questions guiding this study. Each interview question is marked to show how it is related to the research questions. The central research question for this study is indicated by the abbreviation CRQ in parenthesis after certain interview questions. The sub-questions of this study are indicated by the abbreviation SQ and are found in parenthesis after certain interview questions.

1. Please introduce yourself to me and describe your position at the school. (Demographic)
2. Please describe your experiences as far as the leadership practices that you have encountered at this school and within the county (Diamond & Spillane, 2016). (CRQ)
3. Please describe some of the workplace situations that have been catalysts for change in leadership practices (Spillane, 2006). (SQ2)
4. Please describe how you perceive interactions between leaders and followers within your school (Spillane, 2006). (SQ1)
5. How about within other schools in the county (Spillane, 2006)? (SQ1)
6. Please describe how you see yourself as an educational leader (Diamond & Spillane, 2016). (SQ3)
7. Please describe how you fit into the leadership network of the county school system? Or

is there is an opportunity for a leadership role outside of your classroom (Diamond & Spillane, 2016)? (SQ3)

8. Please describe your experiences with distributed leadership while in this position.
(Diamond & Spillane, 2016). (CRQ)
9. How would you describe distributed leadership's influence on the subject that you teach
(Diamond & Spillane, 2016)? (CRQ)
10. Please describe how you see distributed leadership influencing other subjects within your
school (Diamond & Spillane, 2016). (CRQ)
11. Describe how you perceive the implementation of distributed leadership at your school
(Spillane, 2006). (CRQ)
12. Please tell me about how you would implement distributed leadership differently in your
school or if leadership may be missing something that could have been a beneficial
influence(s) on the subject that you teach (Spillane, 2006). (CRQ)
13. Please describe how teacher leaders are chosen at your school (Diamond & Spillane,
2016). (CRQ)
14. Please share your perceptions of how teacher leaders are identified within other subjects
in your school (Diamond & Spillane, 2016). (CRQ)
15. Please describe the differences that you see in identifying teacher leaders within the
subject you teach and other subjects within your school (Diamond & Spillane, 2016).
(CRQ)
16. Please describe how distributed leadership has changed the academic capacity for the
subject you teach at your school (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). (CRQ)
17. Please share your perceptions of how distributed leadership has changed the overall

academic capacity at your school (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). (CRQ)

18. Please describe how you see distributed leadership's influence(s) on the overall climate within your school (Bellibas & Liu, 2018). (CRQ)
19. Please describe how leadership at your school searches for resources to benefit academic achievement within your school (Sherman, 2005). (SQ1)
20. How does leadership at your school search for resources to benefit academic achievement within the subject that you teach (Sherman, 2005)? (SQ1)
21. How does leadership search for resources to benefit academic achievement within other subjects at your school (Sherman, 2005)? (SQ1)
22. Please share with me anything else that you feel could be beneficial to the current study regarding distributed leadership, leadership within the subject you teach, and identifying leadership within that field of study (Diamond & Spillane, 2016). (CRQ)

Interview question 1 (IQ1) was an ice breaker question that provided demographic information for the study. The question was also posed in the hopes of allowing each teacher to rid his or herself of any anxiety about the interview. I let each teacher introduce him or herself, talk about what each one does at the school, and what he or she teaches in response to this question.

IQ2, IQ3, IQ4, and IQ5 investigated how the teachers perceived the different aspects that make up distributed leadership (leadership practices, workplace situations, and interactions between leaders and followers) in their respective schools and within the county school system for IQ5. IQ6 and IQ7 looked at how the teachers viewed themselves as leaders and if the school system was truly utilizing the leader-plus concept within distributed leadership. IQ7 also revealed if teachers were aware of the different leadership positions that they could move into

within their schools or at the county offices.

IQ8, IQ9, and IQ10 delved into the experiences that the teachers have had with the term distributed leadership in their current position and current school. IQ9 and IQ10 differentiated how the participants saw distributed leadership affecting the subject that they teach and other subjects that are taught within the same school building. IQ11 and IQ12 looked at the implementation of distributed leadership principles within the school where the participant teaches and asked for suggestions as to how implementation could have been done differently.

IQ13, IQ14, and IQ15 focused on the selection of academic leaders within the four subjects that the participants within this study teach. These questions seemed redundant to some of the participants but I formatted them intentionally to attempt to peel away at anything that may be hindering the participants' memory or to get them to think about the situation in a different way in order to gain more data. The three questions go back to the original distributed leadership study by Spillane at Chicago elementary schools (Diamond & Spillane, 2016).

IQ16 and IQ17 shifted the focus to the influence of distributed leadership on academic capacity (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). IQ18 focused on the overall climate of the school where the teacher works. IQ19, IQ20, and IQ21 focused on academic resources and revealed some minor differences in leadership selections much like Spillane's original study (Diamond & Spillane, 2016). The final question, IQ22, asked each teacher to fill in any gaps that he or she recognized that the interview questions did not investigate and share anything that I as the researcher and interviewer might have missed that could have been important to the study.

Observation

The second step in data collection was when I observed a faculty meeting at another middle school in McCullough County. "Direct observation has been described as the gold

standard among qualitative data collection techniques” (Morgan, Pullon, Macdonald, McKinlay, & Gray, 2017, p. 1060). I would have liked to have done more of these, but I did not receive permission to do this in some schools. A couple of schools would have let me do this towards the end of the research phase, but due to my job and the amount of time and driving required to get more observations, I had to stop with this one observation. I kept a research journal throughout the study and I developed an observation protocol (see Appendices F & G).

I think it was important to conduct the observation after the interviews. If a teacher was describing to me during an interview his or her perceptions of distributed leadership and interactions among leaders and I attended a staff meeting and observed something that was definitely not within the bounds of distributed leadership, I would have asked for a second interview with that teacher to clarify the comments. Fortunately, this was not necessary and high levels of distributed leadership were detected during the faculty meeting observation.

I had originally planned on conducting two staff meeting observations or academic department meeting observations at each of the schools where I conducted interviews had I been approved in a county in my home state of West Virginia. As mentioned before, this was made considerably more difficult to achieve as I was approved in McCullough County, Tennessee, nearly 300 miles from my home. The observation that took place was scheduled and I assumed the role as a nonparticipant observer although I smiled and celebrated in my heart and mind with all of the teachers when it was announced they were all receiving new laptops (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Document Analysis

I analyzed TDOE guidelines for distributed leadership that I found on their website. These documents included the Instructional Supervisor Evaluation Rubric (TDOE, 2020a),

Teacher Leader Guidebook (TDOE, 2020b), Tennessee Administrator Evaluation Rubric (TDOE, 2020c), 2018-2019 TEAM Administrator Evaluator Handbook (TDOE, 2020d), and the Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards (TDOE, 2020e). I read through each of these documents looking for mentions of distributed leadership. This was done to see how TDOE's view of distributed leadership equates to common definitions in the literature to make certain that the schools and my research are discussing the same terminology. I also reviewed this information to make certain that I was aware of TDOE policies related to distributed leadership in case major flaws in policies were revealed from the participant interviews. Other researchers can easily perform the same search for this information via the Internet regardless of which state or locality they are performing research in.

Data Analysis

I used an inductive strategy to analyze the data in this study (Yin, 2014). I listened to each interview multiple times and looked for words and phrases that repeat. I also read through the transcripts of each interview multiple times searching for words and statements that repeat or are common. I coded the common words and phrases that I found and grouped them under the themes that are presented in the results section.

I also examined the data looking for patterns that are not obvious from the initial analysis of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2014). I read each interview from IQ1 through IQ22. I also read each teacher's answer to IQ1, then IQ2, and so on all the way through IQ22. I then read answers to different questions randomly across different interviews looking for patterns that would not easily be detected. I made every effort to find out what exactly was happening in this case and did not approach the data with opinions of my own, nor did I allow data from other studies to cloud my perspective. I posited some rival explanations to what I found in the study

(Yin, 2014). I also used the distributed leadership literature to reject these rival explanations and thereby strengthened the results of my study (Yin, 2014).

I also read and analyzed numerous times the research and observation journals I developed based on the observations of a faculty meeting and the key facts I took away from the documentation. I used initial or open coding to categorize the words and concepts that reappeared throughout the journal(s) and documentation (Saldana, 2016). I used lean coding concepts to whittle the large number of codes down to 20 that were more manageable and easier to work with in the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used pattern matching techniques with strict rules to elicit the true patterns and themes from the data so as not to present patterns that are easily challenged as coincidental (Yin, 2014). I described the data in a way the reader would readily understand which data collection process was used to elicit which pieces of data (Morgan et al., 2017). I also compared the concepts and themes that arose from each of the three data collection methods (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Trustworthiness

I took multiple steps to insure the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and possible transferability of my findings from this study. I wanted to be certain that readers of the study have no doubts to the authenticity, genuineness, and honesty of the data elicited from participants. I also wanted no doubt to remain as to the accuracy of themes that are presented in the results and discussion sections of this paper.

Credibility

To give this study a better chance of being credible and truly reflecting reality, I used three tools. First, by conducting 14 interviews and observing a faculty meeting, I had prolonged engagement in the field (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Prolonged engagement in the field made my

study more credible and shows that I did not run into each school, work as quickly as I could, and throw enough data into a Word document to gain the necessary number of pages. Rather, I stuck around and developed a full understanding of the situation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Second, I triangulated the data in this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used interviews, observations, and document analysis to develop themes and results for discussion. I completed 14 interviews, which gave me multiple sources of information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Lastly, I used member checks to make sure the data is correct and the results I reported are accurate (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). I sent each of the transcribed interviews back to each specific participant, asked if my transcription was correct, if changes needed to be made, or if anything needed to be added. “Member checking covers a range of activities including returning the interview transcript to participants, a member check interview using the interview transcript data or interpreted data, a member check focus group, or returning analyzed synthesized data” (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016, p. 1803).

Dependability and Confirmability

I provided lengthy, rich descriptions of the case for the reader (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I also described the setting and the sites within that setting for the reader. I kept a research journal throughout the process of this study that can be used within dependability and confirmability audits to ensure that interviews and other research procedures were conducted with consistency (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Transferability

I utilized peer debriefing to consider the transferability of data and results to other cases and other similar settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I sent my study to a middle school teacher in South Carolina. She shared her thoughts about the accuracy and transferability of the data and

results to other middle school settings (Figg, Wenrick, Youker, Heilman, & Schneider, 2010). A distributed leadership study at one middle school likely has some chance of being relevant and transferable to similar middle school settings, but I used the discussion with this peer to make that final judgement and not my opinion (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

Initially, I received approval from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before any interviews were conducted or any other data collected. I assigned pseudonyms to protect the names of teachers, principals, schools, and districts. I am storing data that were collected in paper or hard copy format and on my recorders in a file cabinet at my home and locked via a key, for a minimum of three years (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Electronic data I am storing on my computer is password protected and will be kept for a minimum of three years (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I experienced several things that I did not anticipate with traveling to these schools. At Ernest Hemingway Middle School, I witnessed students on two different occasions being brought into the office for fighting and bullying. Some of these were severe cases. At William Faulkner Middle School, I witnessed a student tell a resource officer that he would not pick up his candy bar wrapper and the resource officer took him to the office to be disciplined. One teacher I interviewed told me that one school in the district has severe behavior issues and the administration has basically a "zero discipline" policy. The teacher told me that school is a dangerous place. I informed my committee chair of these events immediately.

My values, along with the required ethics, are present from the beginning of the study until I exit the study and beyond (Reid, Brown, Smith, Cope, & Jamieson, 2018). Another topic discussed in Reid et al. (2018) was having a reflexive attitude toward the research. This reflexive attitude means that my values and ethical beliefs will become automatic responses to

any unforeseen circumstance in the study (Reid et al, 2018). This is why I reported these events to my chair.

Summary

The nested-case study described in this chapter is a qualitative study. Interviews, an observation, and document analysis took place within middle schools in McCullough County, to provide triangulation of data (Yin, 2014). I conducted fourteen interviews with math, science, English, and social studies teachers during the course of this study.

I used 22 open-ended questions to navigate the semi-structured interviews, which served as the bulk of the data collection. Next, I listened to these interviews multiple times, transcribed them, searched through my research journal and observation journal, and analyzed Tennessee Department of Education documentation related to distributed leadership in order to develop major themes for the presentation of case results. Trustworthiness, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, were key factors to which I adhered to at all times while conducting an ethical study that was within the bounds of the IRB approval I received.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this nested-case study was to discover the perceptions of middle school teachers in McCullough County regarding the influence of distributed leadership on the subject matter they teach. This chapter begins with descriptions of the participants. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of the teachers and the schools where they work. From there, I present answers to the research questions from the data that were collected and narrative descriptions of the themes that emerged from the interviews are presented. The voice of the participants will be heard throughout this chapter in narrative form and via direct quotations. The chapter closes with a summary of the items that were presented.

Participants

This study was a nested-case study in which I conducted interviews in five middle schools and observed a faculty meeting at another school. Participant demographics are presented in Table 1. Short narrative descriptions of each participant follow (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Subject Taught	Gender	School
Cindy	ELA	F	Zora Neale Hurston
Sally	ELA	F	Ernest Hemingway
Alaina	Science	F	Ernest Hemingway
Patty	Science	F	Zora Neale Hurston
Sabrina	Social Studies	F	William Faulkner
Michelle	Social Studies	F	William Faulkner
Levina	Science	F	William Faulkner
Layla	ELA	F	Zora Neale Hurston
Susie	Social Studies	F	Ernest Hemingway
Kelli	Social Studies	F	Carson McCullers
Chrissey	Science	F	James Fenimore Cooper
Ted	Math	M	William Faulkner
Tina	ELA	F	James Fenimore Cooper
Kiersten	ELA	F	James Fenimore Cooper

The participants in this study included 14 middle school teachers from McCullough County, Tennessee. The participants taught various subjects as follows: five taught ELA, four taught science, four taught social studies, and one taught math. Of those, one was male and 13 were female. Five of the participants teach ELA, four of them teach science, four of them teach social studies, and one of them teaches math. All of the participants signed a consent form before being interviewed (see Appendix H). The participants are from five middle schools within McCullough County. I received approval to conduct research in eight schools, however,

three schools yielded no interviews. A faculty meeting was observed at one of the middle schools within the county where no interviews took place. A description of each of the teachers follows below.

Cindy

Cindy was the first participant in this study. She has over 20 years of experience teaching ELA at Zora Neale Hurston Middle School. Cindy has seen leadership changes during her tenure at this school and has been called upon at different times to be a part of the leadership team. Her years of experience were very useful in providing an interview that touched on a broad base of leadership subjects.

Sally

Sally is the chair of the ELA department at Ernest Hemingway Middle School. She has 9 years of teaching experience. Her intense devotion to ELA was evident, resulting in an outstanding interview. She brought to light several issues that were discussed in this paper.

Alaina

Alaina teaches science at Ernest Hemingway Middle School. While newer to McCullough County than some of her counterparts, she has previously taught science for other school districts. Being new to McCullough County, Alaina brought a fresh perspective to the research and to her description of what she experienced thus far within the school district.

Patty

Patty teaches science at Zora Neale Hurston Middle School. She has 7 years of experience teaching. Patty has no interest in joining the leadership team of her school. Her main focus is her classroom and engaging her students about the wonders of science.

Sabrina

Sabrina teaches social studies at William Faulkner Middle School. She has 2 years of experience. Sabrina has other certifications that would allow her to teach elsewhere, but she says she is very happy at William Faulkner Middle School and could not imagine being anywhere else.

Michelle

Michelle is the department chair for social studies at William Faulkner Middle School. She has over 20 years of experience teaching and has seen numerous leadership teams and administrators come and go at William Faulkner Middle School during her years of service. Her experience resulted in an insightful interview.

Levina

Levina teaches science at William Faulkner Middle School. Levina has taught at other schools in McCullough County, but like Sabrina, she says she is very happy at William Faulkner Middle School. Her experiences at other schools in the county contributed to some interesting findings within this study.

Layla

Layla teaches ELA at Zora Neale Hurston Middle School. She has 6 years of experience. Like the other teachers I interviewed at this school, she raved about her coworkers, the administration, and the school.

Susie

Susie teaches social studies at Ernest Hemingway Middle School. She has many years of experience in the teaching field and has encountered many styles of leadership. These experiences helped to make her interview very rich as well as her descriptions of the school

where she was teaching when her interview was conducted.

Kelli

Kelli teaches social studies at Carson McCullers Middle School. She has experience teaching in other states besides Tennessee and has held leadership positions elsewhere as well. Her love of the students and zeal to further help them in an administrator capacity were evident in each of her responses.

Chrissey

Chrissey teaches science at James Fenimore Cooper Middle School. She has taught at multiple schools within McCullough County, Tennessee. Like other science teachers I interviewed, she has no interest in being in leadership. Teaching the wonders of science to children is her passion.

Ted

Ted teaches math at William Faulkner Middle School. He is new to McCullough County Schools. Ted also taught math in his home state before moving to Tennessee.

Tina

Tina teaches ELA at James Fenimore Cooper Middle School. She has taught ELA at multiple grade levels and has over 15 years of experience teaching. Her variety of experiences resulted in a lengthy interview where she shared some information from a different viewpoint compared to the other participants. This different viewpoint generated an outlier in the data.

Kiersten

Kiersten teaches ELA at James Fenimore Cooper Middle School. She is also involved in the leadership of the school. Kiersten provided the longest interview of the 14 as she takes her involvement in leadership very seriously and is working on numerous projects to better her

school. The fire alarm went off during Kiersten's interview. We had to evacuate and stand outside with the students, which made her interview very interesting to transcribe as it was in two parts.

Results

This study produced results generated from semi-structured interviews, a faculty meeting observation, distributed leadership policy documentation, and a research journal I created. Through the data, I found several teachers credited distributed leadership for improving behavior in McCullough County Middle Schools. Sally and Levina both indicated in their interviews, that much like the original distributed leadership study performed by Spillane and his team, preferences are shown among the four core subjects with English and math being in a superior position to social studies and science within both McCullough County and the state of Tennessee.

I used reading, memoing, and coding (Creswell & Poth, 2018) as the first methods to illuminate the results. After interviewing each teacher, I wrote down words in my research journal that stuck out in my mind as potentially being important or that I had heard in interviews with another teacher or teachers. Answers to the central research question and the three sub-questions based on the data collected in the 14 semi-structured interviews follow.

Theme Development

A discussion of the themes generated by the study and presented in Chapter 4 follows. I describe the themes that were generated, compare and contrast them, and provide any thoughts or ideas that came from this process. Each theme presented below is described in light of the interviews and anywhere the faculty meeting coincides or was helpful in the development of the themes, that information is included toward the end of the description of each theme's

development

Behavior. The first word that I wrote down in my research journal was *behavior*. Multiple teachers addressed *behavior* in their interviews. Two teachers credited distributed leadership with correcting extreme school-wide behavior problems and in doing so, creating an environment where learning could occur. I grouped the words and terms *behavior*, *positive behavior*, *suspension*, *Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS)*, *father figure*, and *authority* under the theme *Behavior*.

Sabrina said this about the link between behavior and distributed leadership:

So, with the distribution it helps a lot with behavioral issues because sometimes we'll have multiple issues at one time and so having the reliable teachers that they do or staff members that they do be able to handle that as well, it's very helpful as far as being able to actually teach academically speaking (Sabrina, personal interview).

Alaina, who is a teacher at a school that has a very formative distributed leadership initiative used the word behavior eight times in her interview. Sally, who has been at that same school much longer than Alaina said this about the dramatic changes due to distributed leadership's influence on behavioral issues:

We've had a lot of rough behavior over the years especially when I started. Lots of suspensions, lots of kids getting kicked out, lots of bad behavior problems and it affected, like people didn't respect the principals, the kids didn't, the teachers didn't. We had a lot of teacher turnover. I think we lost like 50 teachers in one year. It was ridiculous (Sally, personal interview).

Levina mentioned to me that she had previously taught at another middle school in the county and she was glad to be away from that place. She told me the administration had a policy

where no punitive actions were to be taken against students due to the socio-economic status of the students. She told me stories of students walking up and down aisles during class with no repercussions, students getting in other students faces trying to get the students who were sitting down to stop doing the in-class assignment that was taking place, and sometimes to intimidate students. Levina went on to tell me that while she is glad she is gone, she is still fearful of violence occurring at that school due to the lack of discipline being implemented by the administration.

I experienced two episodes while waiting in the office at Ernest Hemingway Middle School. The first time I visited the school, two girls had just been in a fight and had been brought into the office. One girl had already been suspended and left before I sat down. The other girl was suspended while I was there. Her guardian picked her up but not before visiting with members of the administration to object to the suspension.

On my second visit to Ernest Hemingway Middle School, a teacher with whom I did not conduct an interview had to hold a boy's hand and bring him to the office where he was handed over to a guidance counselor. This boy had attacked multiple students during an exam. This was one of the schools where I found that distributed leadership is in a nascent state and while many small gains were taking place, there was a long history here that must be overcome to change behavior, therefore creating an environment where students are safe and learning can truly occur.

I interviewed three teachers at Ernest Hemingway Middle School. Alaina and Susie were newer and addressed what they had heard about the school in the past related to behavior issues. Both teachers indicated that improvements had been made, but problems still existed. The third teacher that I interviewed at this school, Sally, had been there long enough to see numerous administration changes and heavy teacher turnover. She indicated that the school had come a

very long way regarding behavior, but numerous challenges still us challenges that the administration, teachers, and staff faced and must combat to truly help the school grow academically.

While I was waiting in the office for a teacher to come get me, the school counselor struck up a conversation with me. His experiences coincided with the conclusions of the three participants whom I interviewed at that school. I found numerous bright spots in McCullough County Schools and a wealth of helpful, caring, and professional people. My wish, though, is that the schools in McCullough County that are facing tough challenges surrounding student behavior, turnover, and leadership issues can overcome them, move forward, and provide atmospheres that help McCullough County children for many years to come.

The sixth school in which I conducted interviews, Herman Melville Middle School, was where I observed a faculty meeting. I found distributed leadership to be evident at this school. Interactions between the administration and teachers seemed to be very positive. Measurable goals were reviewed during the meeting and while everyone seemed to realize they had individual responsibilities within the school, teamwork and family were emphasized. I was encouraged to see teachers' and administrators' charitable works being reviewed during this meeting not long before Christmas as the staff had quietly communicated the names of children in need to others and gifts were bought to help these students. The teachers made the principal aware of students whom they believed needed extra help and they planned ways of approaching parents with thoughtful methods of offering and providing extra help to those students who were in need academically. The meeting was heartwarming to witness from beginning to end and no better way of finishing the meeting up could have been scripted as the principal announced that all of the teachers were getting new laptops, which was met by a raucous wave of cheers.

Behavior was a topic that was covered during the faculty meeting that I observed. The principal shared statistics from the current school year and the previous school year regarding fighting, suspensions, and other behavior issues. The principal told the faculty that he is very proud of the improvements that they were making.

Servant leadership. From the interview data, I grouped the terms *servant leader*, *authoritarian*, and *dictatorship* under the theme *Servant Leadership*. Cindy and Layla stressed the importance of *servant leadership* in creating buy-in for implementing distributed leadership and making the program work. Chrissey described leadership at James Fenimore Cooper Middle School as *authoritarian*, which is not conducive to a successful distributed leadership program. Sally used the term *dictatorship* as a way of describing the antithesis of what exists when teachers are being represented. Suzie used the term *dictatorial* much in the way Chrissey did to describe leadership that is far away on the leadership spectrum. Servant leadership was also evident in the school where I observed a faculty meeting. The principal asked the faculty numerous times if there was anything that they needed, any way that he could help them, and reinforced that his door is always open to his team members.

Resource disparity. The third theme that emerged was *resource disparity*. Levina and Sally indicated to me that English and math are treated as the chosen subjects while not enough emphasis is being placed on science and social studies. Sally, an English teacher, even questioned the resources or lack thereof that is appropriated for science.

Students as leaders. Another theme that emerged in an interview with Tina was that of *students as leaders*. I added this to my list of themes because I see it as a valid outlier in the data. An open-minded interpretation of a distributed leadership program would include some students as stakeholders or leaders within the program (Harris, 2008).

County politics. The fifth theme generated from the interviews was *county politics*. Some teachers see politics within the school district playing a part in the hiring and promotions processes. Some teachers who have taught in other counties within Tennessee or in other states feel their experiences, while enough to get them a job as a teacher in McCullough County, are not looked upon as significant enough to put them into leadership roles within their school buildings or at the county offices.

Leadership qualifications. *Leadership qualifications* was another theme that emerged from the data. Many teachers, including some who held leadership positions, did not know how leaders are chosen within their building or at the county level or what qualifications they needed to have to pursue these leadership positions. Some teachers did not know the criteria or prerequisites for different leadership positions or if formal training was required. Not all teachers were unaware of these requirements, but some that mentioned that at least one leadership position had been filled before it was posted and some felt that leaders were picked by the administration rather than a true interview process being in place.

During the faculty meeting observation, the principal introduced some new trainings that he planned on sending teachers to. These trainings, in Atlanta and Nashville, would directly benefit their school environment. The trainings would also look good when any of the teachers would apply for a leadership position or some other form of advancement.

New initiatives to foster change. The last theme that emerged was *new initiatives to foster change*. Several schools began new clubs, teacher programs, and family programs to bolster morale for students, their families, and their teachers. I managed not to say anything about this during the interview, but I was admittedly stunned by the level of caring when one teacher explained to me some of the new family programs the school has started. These family

programs, along with the programs that were discussed during the faculty meeting observation, illustrated to me a level of caring possessed by McCullough County teachers that I have simply never seen before. I regard teaching in McCullough County as a ministry after seeing the love and devotion exhibited by these teachers.

An interesting contrast exists among the themes of *servant leadership*, *leadership qualifications*, and *county politics*. Teachers gave me several qualifications they believed were required for obtaining leadership positions in McCullough County. Cindy and Layla credited *servant leadership* with being the quality that helps to gain buy-in and makes distributed leadership work in their school. However, *servant leadership* did not appear to be a trait that McCullough County was looking for or training anyone on from what I was able to see within my research. At the same time, county politics came up as a theme. Teachers with experience in other counties or states may have the requisite skills and experiences that McCullough County is looking for, but these teachers feel that because they gained these skills and experiences elsewhere the county seems not to value them as much as the skills and experiences of those from within McCullough County.

Comparing *servant leadership* and *students as leaders* provides a hopeful scenario. Hopefully, students who do act as leaders are being told about *servant leadership* and how having the confidence to serve others without fear while holding a title of leadership is very healthy for an organization and the interpersonal relationships within each school building. Training a new generation of *servant leaders* could be beneficial to McCullough County as some of those students will likely study to become teachers themselves and maybe even stay close to home and work for McCullough County Schools.

The themes *resource disparity* and *new initiatives to foster change* create an interesting

comparison and contrast. Several schools implemented programs for teachers, students, and families alike. Some of these programs are general, while some of them target certain subjects such as math, reading, or literacy. While these programs are good, they also bring a focus to the resource disparity question. Levina and Sally both noted that English and math seem to be treated better than science and social studies.

The preceding comparison and contrast led to juxtaposing the themes *servant leadership* and *resource disparity*. A servant leader would not or should not be choosing to serve one department and withhold from another department. Servant leadership training and its equal application could be one way of smoothing out some of the resource disparities.

While looking at ways of comparing and contrasting *resource disparity* with other themes, I thought of how different teachers answered questions pertaining to this topic. Five of the six teachers from Zora Neale Hurston Middle School and William Faulkner Middle School where distributed leadership seemed to be working well said they were not aware of any *resource disparity* and the sixth teacher had worked in a school that was not doing well previous to that. This sixth teacher mentioned that a *resource disparity* existed at the school where she worked previously. Also, the two teachers who said a resource disparity existed were both veteran teachers, while many of the newer teachers said that no resource disparity existed, which may be due to them not having worked for McCullough County Schools as long as the other teachers and having as many experiences as the veteran teachers.

The themes *students as leaders* and *leadership qualifications* provide an interesting comparison and leads to the following questions. Are students being taught about leadership? Is popularity the defining characteristic in labeling students as leaders or do they genuinely show leadership traits at this early stage in life? I can see a real benefit to teaching leadership to

students at an early age. Teaching leadership to students would not only prepare them for the future and hopefully make leaders of them no matter which field of endeavor they enter into as adults, but it also could help with the behavior issues that some of these middle schools in McCullough County have been dealing with for some time.

A comparison of the themes *behavior* and *students as leaders* goes right along with the previous comparison. Correcting student behavior creates a better learning environment and if leadership is one of those topics that is being taught, it will give students a better chance at becoming leaders. Teaching leadership to students will also give them a foundation where they will be accustomed to working towards a goal and completing the necessary steps to attaining goals much like attaining the leadership qualifications that McCullough County expects teachers to complete.

New initiatives to foster change could impact several of the other codes. McCullough County could utilize some of the family nights to focus on improving *behavior*. The county could also implement some training on servant leadership, which could have the positive aspects of improving their distributed leadership initiatives and helping to eliminate any perceived *disparities in resource allocation*.

Interview Transcripts

I used an inductive strategy to analyze the data in this study (Yin, 2014). I listened to each interview at least twice. I read through each interview transcript from beginning to end at least twice. I then read each of the 14 answers to IQ1, looking for phrases and topics that repeat. I then did the same for the other 21 interview questions across all 14 interviews.

Listening to each interview was beneficial but getting the interviews into a Word document and using the search box was a powerful tool. It allowed me to find the number of

times words like behavior was used. I searched for synonyms of different terms to see if one teacher may be speaking of the same topic but using different terminology to describe the same type of event or issue. An example is Sabrina speaking of pizza parties for teachers. She mentioned that the administration was looking for ways to improve life for teachers. She did not specifically use the phrase *teacher programs*, which is a code in the study, but her description means the same thing as another teacher speaking of how her principal and administrators were trying to improve her work atmosphere.

The search box in Word also allowed me to discover how many teachers used certain words. The term *behavior* was used by itself 17 times. It was used twice in the term *positive behavior* and twice in the acronym *PBIS*. One of these searches in Word provided what may be the key quotation for this study regarding the link between behavior and distributed leadership.

Sabrina said:

So, with the distribution it helps a lot with behavioral issues because sometimes we'll have multiple issues at one time and so having the reliable teachers that they do or staff members that they do be able to handle that as well, it's very helpful as far as being able to actually teach academically speaking (Sabrina, personal interview).

I also performed random comparisons to see if topics and themes were present in the answers to different interview questions. I relied on the transcripts and reviewed them often to double check what I wrote, to make certain that the data presented is accurate, and in the Theme Development section that begins on page 91. The codes and themes from my inductive analysis follow (see Table 2).

Table 2

Codes and Themes

Codes	Occurrences	Theme
1. Behavior	17	Behavior
2. Positive behavior	2	
3. Suspension	2	
4. Positive Behavior Intervention System, PBIS	2	
5. Father figure	1	
6. Authority	2	
7. Servant leader	5	Servant Leadership
8. Authoritarian	1	
9. Dictatorial	2	
10. English/Math vs. Science/Social Studies	2	Resource Disparity
11. Science resources	2	
12. Students as Leaders	1	Students as Leaders
13. Leadership experiences from other school districts	2	County Politics
14. Not knowing how leaders are chosen	2	Leadership Qualifications
15. Criteria	2	
16. Prerequisites	2	
17. Formal Training	2	
18. Job filled before posting	2	
19. Picked by administration	2	
20. Clubs	9	New Initiatives to Foster Change
21. Family programs	2	
22. Teacher programs	3	

Research Question Responses

Central Research Question

The Central Research Question for this study was: How do middle school teachers describe the aspects of distributed leadership they encounter (Spillane, 2006)? Zora Neale Hurston Middle School and William Faulkner Middle School exhibited high degrees of distributed leadership. Coincidentally, teachers in each of these two schools also saw interactions between leaders and followers as being much more positive than in the other schools where I conducted interviews. Cindy used the theme servant leadership four times in her interview and seemed to tie servant leadership to effective distributed leadership.

Cindy said:

I think it's so individualized depending on the dynamics . . . some of our mentors and me being a mentor before I can say this, that relationship is so important and I think if that leader is trying to be a servant leader they get a lot of cooperation, they get a lot of like yes, yes, yes (Cindy, personal interview).

Behavior was a theme that appeared often in the interviews. Sabrina, Susie, Sally, and Alaina saw positive changes in student behavior due to distribution of leadership within their schools. Sabrina mentioned that on occasion there would be multiple student behavior issues that occurred at the same time. She credited her administration with distributing leadership to reliable teachers and giving those teachers the authority to discipline students and handle disruptive situations. This distribution of leadership allowed teachers to silence disruptive situations quickly instead of waiting on the administration who may already be busy dealing with another student behavior issue. By giving their staff the ability to quell disruption, the administration helped to create an atmosphere that was more conducive to student learning and

allowed teachers to focus more time on academics.

Cindy and Layla both described their administration as servant leaders. They credited the theme of servant leadership as a factor that contributed to the success of distributed leadership in their school. Cindy said that the servant leadership style of her school's administration encouraged the buy-in of the school's staff when it came to the distribution of leadership across the school.

Sub-Question 1

James Fenimore Cooper Middle School and Ernest Hemingway Middle School seemed to be struggling with distributed leadership based on the data collected from the interviews. The quality of interactions between leaders and followers seemed to track with the levels of distributed leadership being present just like in the previous two schools mentioned previously. Ernest Hemingway Middle School, however, has a nascent distributed leadership initiative that is just now beginning to see results in some areas. Susie described an atmosphere where negative morale had long been present, but fortunately due to new faces, new policies, new leaders, and new initiatives, some of those old ways and attitudes were slowly being eradicated. Sally added:

I think this year is the first year that they've really tried to pay attention to teachers as leaders. It used to just be department chairs, administrators, and that's it. Now they have representatives. Teachers got to select a representative that meets, I think it's every month or maybe it's bimonthly, but they meet every month to kind of voice concerns and they are our voice (Sally, personal interview).

At James Fenimore Cooper Middle School, Kiersten and Chrissey painted a similar picture to what Susie described at her Ernest Hemingway Middle School.

Kiersten said in her interview:

I hate to have to sound so negative with this response, but I feel that if we're speaking from a perspective of leaders as administrators, I find that the staff doesn't have a whole lot of respect. They don't show a whole lot of respect towards them. There's one in particular that people I feel do show respect towards, but the other ones I feel are like in staff meetings people talk over them, they ignore emails, and some of it is as I have been told directly by some people, it's because of who it's from (Kiersten, personal interview).

Chrissey's responses coincided with many of Kiersten's perceptions of interactions within their school. Chrissey said:

I think the interactions are generally positive, but we have a very authoritarian, very minutia-driven leader and I think that sometimes, again everything is very positive, but I'm not sure everybody really wears the face that maybe they're feeling. And so, again, it's positive, but it...it's often just basic demands (Chrissey, personal interview).

Interactions among leaders and followers at Carson McCullers Middle School were rated as positive in the one interview that I conducted. However, since I only performed one interview there, I was hesitant to put this Carson McCullers Middle School in with Zora Neale Hurston Middle School and William Faulkner Middle School where distributed leadership was evident. I might have done that if I had the opportunity to perform more interviews there.

Three of the themes that emerged from this study are evident in the interactions between leaders and followers in McCullough County middle schools. Sally mentioned that science might not be getting the same resources that ELA was getting in her school. Levina described math and ELA as being more important to McCullough County leaders than science and social studies. If their perceptions are correct, then interactions between leaders and followers may be cordial in many situations, but these interactions are surely not equal if administrators are indeed

treating math and ELA better from a resource standpoint than they are science and social studies.

County politics and leadership qualifications were the other two themes that emerged and were related to the second sub-question. Kelli had been in leadership positions in another school district but felt that county politics was keeping her out of leadership roles and may continue to do so in the future. She was also unaware of how leaders were chosen in McCullough County schools as well as the leadership qualifications necessary to obtain these positions. Likewise, Sabrina, a newer teacher, and Layla, a teacher with six years of experience were both unaware of leadership positions that they could move into in the future. Susie even shared that one of the leaders within her school was someone that used to work at that school, but was not employed there at the time of her interview. She questioned the logic of having a leader that does not work at the school representing the teachers.

Sub-Question 2

McCullough County middle school teachers offered a variety of answers related to workplace situations that acted as catalysts for change in leadership practices. One answer that was provided to interview questions by Kelli and Layla was increased student population due to redistricting. Layla told me that multiple behavior issues were exhibited by some of the new students who were thrown into a new environment. Administrators and teachers had to change schedules and change many of the ways they did things to accommodate the influx of students.

New Initiatives to Foster Change was a theme that correlates with this sub-question as new programs for students, families, and teachers alike came up in the interviews with Ted, Kelli, and Sally. Kelli said that the decreasing socioeconomic condition of many of the students at Carson McCullers Middle School has forced the administration to have family nights, parent nights, and community involvement projects for the students. These activities have been

implemented in order to try to attract parents and families who may see the school as an imposing entity due to the socioeconomic situation they find themselves in. Kelli noted that getting parents past that fear or embarrassment and into the school community helps the children academically, emotionally, recognizing they have parental support. These parent nights also help socially, as the students and their families encounter friendly faces and interact with people in the school community.

One change described by Ted was the implementation of teacher-led support groups. Previously, new teachers did not have many avenues outside the standard teacher-administration channels to ask questions, gain tribal knowledge, and complete onboarding at their school. After Ted addressed his administration about this void that created a sink-or-swim atmosphere for new teachers, the administration teamed up with the teachers in that school to create a support group. My interviews with Ted and Levina were both interrupted by teacher leaders checking in with them to make sure everything was going well for them.

Chrissey told me minority students are being underserved and that more should be done to help them. I believe underserving of minority students could be categorized as a workplace situation that should be a catalyst in changing leadership practices. Chrissey indicated to me that she was starving for leadership to enact policies to try to correct these deficiencies.

Sub-Question 3

The 14 interviews that I conducted with McCullough County middle school teachers offered a wide array of answers to interview questions related to leadership opportunities outside of their classroom. Three of the teachers I interviewed admitted to being too new to know what leadership opportunities existed within their schools and at the county level. I was fortunate enough to interview current and former department chairs, team leaders, and a former lead

teacher. Surprisingly, two teachers were in leadership roles and did not know how leaders are chosen within their schools or within the county. Other teachers were able to report leadership opportunities but were not aware of the prerequisites or requirements to hold those leadership positions. Two teachers told me that a couple of leadership roles had already been filled before the jobs were posted for others to apply.

Three of the science teachers I interviewed had no interest in joining their respective leadership teams. Each of these teachers were fully committed to teaching the wonders of science to their students and are dedicating their careers to their classrooms. Two teachers who have moved to McCullough County from other states saw the county leadership structure as being very political and feel that their past experiences are not valued by leadership. These teachers told me their qualifications were enough to get them a teaching job in the county, but their leadership experiences did not seem to be transferrable to McCullough County due to what they perceive as “a good ole boy network,” so they do not see themselves being able to move up to a leadership position.

Of the teachers I interviewed, twelve of them gave numerous answers to the three interview questions that asked about how leadership searches for resources. These teachers said this happens during county meetings, via Internet searches, educational literature searches, and attendance at education conferences. Two teachers admitted they did not know how leadership searches for resources. One of these two teachers and one of the 12 who answered these questions indicated they believe a big disparity exists between subjects in McCullough County. One of these teachers was a veteran science teacher who told me McCullough County has always favored English and math over science and social studies. The other teacher was an English teacher who indicated to me that English and math have resources that science and social studies

do not get.

The theme of Students as Leaders provides another role for teachers. Tina's interview provided this theme for the study. If McCullough County were to take a very open-minded approach to leadership and recognize that some students are leaders in the county as well, then another role for teachers would be to recognize students in their classes that exhibit leadership traits and help those students find ways of obtaining leadership roles within their schools.

The leadership positions that teachers named in interviews are shown in Table 3. Some teachers knew that leadership opportunities existed but were unable to assign a name to them. That is indicated in the last position listing in the table.

Table 3

Leadership Opportunities Named by McCullough County Middle School Teachers

Name of Leadership Position	School or County Position
Team Leader	School
Lead Teacher	School
Department Chair	School
Professional Development Course Instructor	County
Literacy Coach	School/County
Master/Mentor Teacher	County
Club Sponsor	School
Knew that positions were available but could not name	School/County

Document Analysis

I also looked at TDOE policy documents pertaining to distributed leadership as another method of research in this study. The five key documents for this method of data collection were the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) Instructional Supervisor Evaluation Rubric (TDOE 2020a), the TDOE Teacher Leader Guidebook (TDOE 2020b), TEAM Administrator Evaluation Rubric (TDOE 2020c), TEAM Administrator Evaluator Handbook (TDOE 2020d) and the Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards (TDOE 2020e). Standard B1 of the Team Administrator Evaluation Rubric covers numerous topics that involve the interactions of administrators and teachers along with how administrators assign leadership roles to teachers and how administrators “extend impact of educators” (TDOE, 2020c, p. 7).

The document goes on to define this term as:

The goal of extending the impact or positive reach of all educators is to have school

leaders appropriately distribute leadership across the school community as a way to create and/or sustain students' ability to meet or exceed academic and or behavioral growth and achievement targets. (TDOE, 2020c, p. 15).

Numerous criteria within this rubric aligned with the leadership practices and interactions that are two of the aspects of distributed leadership.

I discussed the mistakenly interchanged usage of the terms shared leadership and distributed leadership in the Literature Review. Section A4 of the Instructional Supervisor Evaluation Rubric covers numerous topics and mentions teacher leaders a few times (TDOE 2020a). While distributed leadership is technically not written in this standard, to me it reads very much like a distributed leadership rubric and makes me question if the author or authors fully understood which term to place there.

The Teacher Leader Guidebook calls for administrators to “distribute teacher leadership roles, responsibilities, requirements, and applications to teachers” (TDOE, 2020b, p. 124). As can be seen from the varied answers I received from teachers, leadership was being distributed in some schools and not in others. Some of the participants in this study knew the qualifications and application processes for multiple leadership positions, many did not at all, and some who are currently in leadership positions were uncertain of the qualifications, application individuals, and selection process for multiple leadership roles. One of the standards within the Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards is resource management (TDOE, 2020e). This document was reviewed initially searching for mentions of distributed leadership, but I found that this mention of resource management coincided with a group of interview questions that pertained to the equitable distribution of resources for each of the four subjects the teachers in this study taught at the time of the research.

Peer Review

As mentioned previously, Mrs. Hernandez read my paper and went over the data and results as part of peer checking (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Mrs. Hernandez currently teaches middle school in South Carolina. She has taught at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels in Illinois and South Carolina.

Mrs. Hernandez had this to say:

I could relate to the results. I have also been in several schools where leadership has changed and have seen how much of an impact that can have on school culture and teacher morale. What intrigued me the most was where the teachers talked about servant leaders. I definitely agree with their views. Any time I have been at a school where the principal was actively and routinely involved with the students and teachers in a nonthreatening capacity, it has always created a better culture with more respect. I've also been at a school where the principal thought he was king, was often in his office, and made it so intimidating to approach him. The assistants seemed to follow his style, and I couldn't stand it there. At one of my middle schools, we just had a new principal start at the beginning of the 18-19 school year, and she has really changed the culture of school. The school is very diverse with many students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. She has also implemented more "family night" type activities and it has been making a difference. She is so much more involved with the students and teachers than the former principal. Anyway, I think what you have is great. And yes, in my opinion, you will not find a more caring group of people than a group of teachers (Alice Hernandez, personal interview).

Summary

In this chapter I presented the findings from the 14 middle school teacher interviews that I conducted in McCullough County, Tennessee. Within these results, I described responses to the research questions. These responses generated 22 codes that I grouped into seven themes. These seven themes were (a) behavior, (b) servant leadership, (c) resource disparity, (d) students as leaders, (e) county politics, (f) leadership qualifications, and (g) new initiatives to foster change. Of these themes and codes, behavior was the most significant as the participants mentioned words related to this theme most often. The participant interviews and faculty observation were used to describe the generation of these codes.

In this chapter I have also described levels of distributed leadership I found to be present within each school. Two schools, Zora Neale Hurston Middle School and William Faulkner Middle School appeared to have very high levels of distributed leadership and positive interactions present. Two other schools, Ernest Hemingway Middle School and James Fenimore Cooper Middle School, were just beginning their distributed leadership initiatives. Teachers at Ernest Hemingway Middle School could already see some bright spots from their implementation, while James Fenimore Cooper Middle School's implementation seemed to get off to a rough start. Only one interview was conducted at Carson McCullers Middle School, so it was too difficult for me to ascertain that school's level of distributed leadership. The school where the faculty meeting observation took place, Herman Melville Middle School, also exhibited high levels of the presence of distributed leadership.

In Chapter Four, I also described McCullough County teachers' thoughts on many good and positive things about their respective schools. Teachers shared some negative aspects of their experiences in McCullough County as well. These negative aspects included better serving

minority communities and improving behavior in at least two schools. The chapter included some observations on behavior issues that I made unintentionally while I waited in the main office for different teachers to come get me for their interviews. Some thoughts on distributed leadership documentation published by the State of Tennessee Department of Education was also discussed. The chapter concludes with a peer review by a middle school teacher in South Carolina.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this nested-case study was to discover the perceptions of middle school teachers in McCullough County regarding the influence of distributed leadership on the subject matter they teach. I conducted 14 semi-structured interviews with middle school math, science, English, and social studies teachers to discover their perceptions of the aspects of distributed leadership that they have encountered in their respective schools. I then observed a faculty meeting to discover firsthand the application of distributed leadership in a McCullough County school. I also analyzed documentation from the Tennessee Department of Education that mentioned distributed leadership.

The problem is that distributed leadership at the middle school level does not appear often in the distributed leadership body of literature. A gap exists in the distributed leadership literature at the middle school level. I did find other dissertations that researched distributed leadership at the middle school level. Many of these dissertations had not been published in peer reviewed journals. I also found some articles pertaining to distributed leadership at the middle school level in peer reviewed journals, but not nearly as many as articles pertaining to other levels of education.

This chapter contains a summary of findings that uses interview data to answer the central research questions and its three sub-questions. A discussion of how the study aligns with or deviates from both theoretical and empirical literature is contained in the chapter. I then discuss practical, empirical, and theoretical implications.

The limitations that were placed on the study by external forces and the delimitations that were placed on the study by me are covered. Next, based on the outcomes of this study, I make

recommendations for future research. The chapter then closes with a summary of the information that was presented in the chapter.

Summary of Findings

In this section, the findings of the research study are discussed. The central research question and the three sub-questions for the study are answered via the participant responses. The three methods of data collection for this study were semi-structured interviews, a faculty meeting observation, and a review of distributed leadership documentation. The central research question and three sub-questions follow:

Central Research Question: How do middle school teachers describe the aspects of distributed leadership they encounter?

Sub-question 1: How do middle school teachers describe the interactions of leaders and followers in their schools?

Sub-question 2: How do middle school teachers describe the workplace situations that have served as catalysts for the generation of new leadership practices in their schools?

Sub-question 3: How do middle school teachers describe their roles within the leadership team of their schools?

This study consisted of 14 participants. Among them were five ELA teachers, four social studies teachers, four science teachers, and one math teacher. I conducted each semi-structured interview at the school where each participant teaches.

Central Research Question

How do middle school teachers describe the aspects of distributed leadership they encounter? Just as there is no perfect church as the saying goes, there is also no perfect school system. Good aspects and bad aspects exist in every school within a district or county. This mix

of good and bad qualities revealed itself to be true during the interviews conducted with McCullough County middle schools for this study. Some teachers shared stories of optimism and job satisfaction with me during their interviews. Other teachers shared stories of hostile work environments and of students being slighted.

In schools where interview data revealed that distributed leadership was definitely present, Zora Neale Hurston Middle School and William Faulkner Middle School, teachers seemed to be happier with their jobs and had many good things to say about their superiors. Cindy could see how her principal distributed leadership to the teachers in her school via the TAP program changed the culture within their building by doing so. She was also among a small group of teachers that linked servant leadership to distributed leadership and credited servant leadership with being a mechanism that helps to gain buy-in from staff members when it comes to implementing distributed leadership.

Levina was happy to be at a school where distributed leadership was present. The school where she had worked previously had many behavior problems. The administration at that previous employer wanted her and other teachers to turn a blind eye to the behavior issues and act like they were not there. That is tough for teachers to do when they fear for their own safety.

Chrissey and Kiersten worked at another school where distributed leadership was not evident or was not being utilized correctly (James Fenimore Cooper Middle School). Both of them indicated that teachers showed no respect for the administration of that school and openly defied them in many cases. Chrissey shared with me that she saw no signs of distributed leadership anywhere in their building.

Alaina, Sabrina, Susie, and Ted were all new to McCullough County. All had been teaching in McCullough County for less than 2 years at the time of their interviews. However,

each could see some positive impacts from distributed leadership within their buildings. Alaina and Sabrina could see a difference in behavior within their respective buildings compared to the reputation of the schools and the stories told to them by other teachers. Susie could see distributed leadership's influence in the updating of standards and the way that Ernest Hemingway Middle School was focusing on learning. Ted saw this influence through the way William Faulkner Middle School was mentoring new teachers.

Sub-Question 1

How do middle school teachers describe the interactions of leaders and followers in their schools? Much like the answers that corresponded to the central research question, the answers to this first sub-question also corresponded to the style of leadership within the building where the teachers worked. Susie saw positive interactions in most cases but did indicate that some unprofessional interactions had taken place in some cases. Alaina, who also taught at Ernest Hemingway Middle School, echoed Susie's thoughts, agreeing that most of the interactions were professional but some might have been seen as a little overbearing. However, each of the teachers from Ernest Hemingway indicated that the current leadership was really working on turning that school around from the horrendous reputation it had previously.

Chrissey and Kiersten also indicated that some very unprofessional interactions had taken place at James Fenimore Cooper Middle School. Some teachers would tell other teachers that they purposely deleted emails from certain administrators and refused to do anything that certain administrators would tell them to do. Chrissey said that some of this appeared to be driven by the administration's focus on smaller, insignificant details rather than the bigger picture viewpoint that many successful administrators have.

Overall, and especially within Zora Neale Hurston Middle School and William Faulkner

Middle School, interactions between leaders and followers were viewed as being very positive by the teachers that I interviewed. The teachers at Zora Neale Hurston unanimously described these interactions as positive and described the school as a great place to work. Each of the teachers at William Faulkner also had good things to say about the interaction at their school with Levina stating that the contrast between the school and her previous school were a night and day type difference where the administration had an environment of support for the staff that provided a welcoming and nurturing feeling for teachers.

Sub-Question 2

How do middle school teachers describe the workplace situations that have served as catalysts for the generation of new leadership practices in their schools? McCullough County teachers provided some really great examples to answer this question. Kelli and Layla mentioned the effects of redistricting as a workplace scenario that had been a catalyst for change of leadership practices to combat bad student behavior. Layla described how redistricting brought many behavior issues with it to her school. Kelli told me how redistricting changed bus duty, early morning hold duty, and other duties around getting the students from place to place within Carson McCullers Middle School. Both schools' leaders had to change schedules and some policies to adapt to the changes that redistricting brought to their schools.

Kelli's comments about redistricting ran parallel to how Michelle's discussion about how sometimes policies from the district office sound practical but are sometimes found not to work in practice so well, such as schedule changes and changes to lunch periods. None of the teachers seemed to be against change; they just seemed to want more interaction from the county school administration and more fact-finding at the county level before making changes. Also, if a change does not work well, something must be done to tweak the policy and get it corrected

early on as opposed to continuing to run with something that obviously is not working for any of the stakeholders in that particular school.

Ted told me that when he started teaching in McCullough County, there was no new teacher program. The teacher was hired, sent to his classroom, and expected to sink or swim. During a performance review with his supervisor, Ted brought up this situation. Much to his surprise, the administrator welcomed the critique and implemented a program to mentor new teachers after they are hired. Ted credits this program with much of his success at William Faulkner Middle School.

One instance was mentioned to me where a glaring workplace situation had not yet been a catalyst for change in leadership practices. Chrissey shared with me that James Fenimore Cooper Middle School was a Level One school at the time of her interview, because the school was in the bottom 5% in serving minority populations. Much to her surprise, little had been done to change that. She fully expected schoolwide trainings, county-driven conferences, and more direction from the top, but that did not occur.

Kelli mentioned another workplace situation that should be a catalyst for change in many school districts. She made the following statement in answering IQ11 regarding the implementation of distributed leadership:

I see the distributed leadership. . . I think there needs to be another male influence in the building. We only have one male administrator. I think that a lot of these students have no male figure in their lives. So, I think that is something that might be missing (Kelli, personal interview).

Adding a male to the leadership team, if one is available and qualified, could potentially be something worth exploring in schools that have lots of behavior issues. Education seems to be a

female dominated field in many areas of the country. This view of education being female dominate is not a new concept, but it is important and something that should act as a catalyst for change.

Patty mentioned one situation that is somewhat obvious, but I overlooked, and this is administration changeovers. When an administrator retires, transfers, moves, or is fired, replacing him or her can lead to improved practices, a maintaining of the status quo, or to something much worse. Patty indicated that her principal saw that many of the practices of his predecessor were working when he came on board and was wise enough to keep the beneficial practices and programs in place.

Sub-Question 3

How do middle school teachers describe their roles within the leadership team of their schools? McCullough County middle school teachers provided a variety of answers to this sub-question. Patty, Levina, and Chrissey, all science teachers, were not seeking to move into leadership. Each of them was aware of the leadership opportunities that existed within their schools and within the county but all saw their respective places as being in the classroom teaching the incredible world of science to their students, which I greatly respect.

Alaina and Susie were both too new to pursue a leadership position. While new, Ted was leading a new club at his school at the time of his interview. Tina was aware of leadership positions but was a little ambiguous about possibly pursuing any of them. Layla was also aware of leadership positions but unsure of what she would do in the future. Sabrina was not aware of any leadership positions that would be a fit for her, and unfortunately Kelli felt like she did not fit into the county's mold or political structure to be able to advance into a leadership position. Cindy had held leadership roles previously but stepped down and went back to the classroom

full-time.

Sally and Michelle were department heads and aware of other potential leadership roles when I interviewed them. Kiersten was a member of the leadership team at her school. The answers from these 14 teachers provided a wide range of results to the central research question and the three sub-questions. The fact that some of the teachers were aware of leadership opportunities was good, but some of the negative responses give McCullough County something to work on to encourage every teacher in their school system.

Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to the literature that was reviewed in Chapter Two. My study provided an emphasis on behavior that was stronger and more frequent than in much of the literature that I read. A great deal of the distributed leadership literature focuses on improving schools and creating a better environment for teachers, both of which help to create an atmosphere where learning occurs, but my study found that teachers in McCullough County, Tennessee credit distributed leadership with improving student behavior and therefore creating an atmosphere where teachers can concentrate on academics, and student learning improves as a byproduct of these things.

While pondering the results of my study and thinking about the literature I read, it became apparent to me that distributed leadership theory needs to be expanded and some new theoretical pillars need to be added on to fully capture what makes distributed leadership effective in the field. More than a decade has elapsed since Spillane's original and thorough distributed leadership study. From my review of the literature, a gap in the literature exists in comparison to other topics within education. Now is the perfect time for theorists to look at rival theories, take what works best in those models, and add them to the distributed leadership body

of knowledge. This review would improve distributed leadership as a theory and make it a more productive program once it is implemented in the field. Reviewing and building on to the theoretical model could include best practices, training, and pieces of other theoretical models that could be added to the three pillars of distributed leadership.

The results of this study would be explained much differently by theorists and practitioners of other leadership models. People who endorse the authoritarian model or use it where they work would likely give all of the credit for improved student behavior to the principal. Advocates of shared leadership would say that the principal or principals in each building are doing a great job of sharing leadership. It is likely in every case that one could find different leadership models in the literature and those who advocate for those leadership models would likely be judicious enough to credit distributed leadership with having something to do with the results but would likely endorse their favored model as the true reason for the positive events. A closer look at how the results of this study align with or deviate from the theoretical and empirical literature will deepen this discussion.

Theoretical

I quoted Spillane (2006) in the Literature Review as saying, “Distributed leadership is not a blueprint for doing school leadership more effectively. It is a way to generate insights into how leadership can be practiced more or less effectively” (pp. 9-10). My study amplifies this statement as distributed leadership was evident and showed signs of tremendous effectiveness at two of the schools where I conducted interviews, Zora Neale Hurston Middle School and William Faulkner Middle School, and the school where I observed a faculty meeting, Herman Melville Middle School. One school, Ernest Hemingway Middle School, had a nascent distributed leadership program and a newer administrator in charge so it was too early to tell how

leadership would go in that school, although all three teachers I interviewed at this school indicated that improvements had been made at that point.

At Carson McCullers Middle School, I was only able to interview one teacher, so it would be unfair to compare the results from that one interview to Spillane's comments or theories, although there were positive signs in the results of that interview. The other school, James Fenimore Cooper Middle, mirrored the last part of the Spillane quote as Chrissey said that she saw no signs of the presence of distributed leadership, and she and Kiersten indicated to me that there were some serious problems between the staff and the administration. So, my interviews revealed both the more effective side of leadership and the less effective side of leadership.

Practices. Spillane (2006) credited practices, interactions, and situations with being the three theoretical pillars of distributed leadership, with practices being the more important of the three. Four of my interview questions asked the participants about their experiences with each of these. Three of these questions focused on building-level experiences, and one asked about county-level experiences. Several of the participants indicated that practices are the most important of the theoretical pillars. Cindy's interview was a good example of this. She related how the first principal at her school changed the leadership practices of the school and brought more staff members into leadership roles which changed the entire dynamic of the school. Later, when that principal left and another principal came onboard, this new principal was wise enough to keep many of the initiatives of his predecessor that were reaping results going. This corresponded with Patty's discussion of that same change in leadership.

Interactions. The interviews produced stark contrasts related to the second theoretical pillar of interactions (Spillane, 2006). The three teachers I interviewed at Zora Neale Hurston

Middle School and the three teachers I interviewed at William Faulkner Middle School indicated that interactions between leaders and followers/administration and staff were very professional and very cordial. Layla and Levina both indicated that these positive interactions contributed to very conducive and welcoming environments for teachers and were fundamental to the leadership practices that were being exhibited at both of those schools.

Situations. The participant interviews revealed situations, the third pillar of distributed leadership, that existed in different schools within McCullough County. Sally discussed the history of student behavior at Ernest Hemingway Middle School, and Levina discussed the horrible behavior issues at her previous school. These situations create negative atmospheres for both students and teachers. In Levina's case, when an administrator does nothing to correct the situation and even goes as far as telling teachers to turn a blind eye to what is going on, it creates a situation where teachers want to escape, just as Levina did. In contrast to Levina's story, Sally mentioned that the new principal at Ernest Hemingway Middle was in the process of changing things for the better and making that school's history of terrible behavior a part of long-ago lore. These two interviews provided a great contrast and showed how leaders at two different schools responded to similar situations. One principal responded in a way that jeopardized safety of students and staff, while another responded in a way that could bear positive results for a long time.

Leader-plus. Another aspect of distributed leadership is that of the Leader-Plus Concept (Spillane & Orlina, 2005). This concept was evident in the interviews I did with teachers at Zora Neale Hurston Middle School and William Faulkner Middle School where teachers served in leadership roles and felt like a part of the school team. This concept was not apparent at James Fenimore Cooper Middle School where Chrissey told me that the leadership of that school was

very authoritarian.

Empirical

In addition to the theoretical connections to the body of literature, the results of this study also connect empirically to the body of literature. In my discussion about “Distributed Leadership and the Principal” in Chapter Two, I discussed the principal being a change agent in a (Harris, 2012; Murphy et al. 2009). Interviews with teachers at Zora Neale Hurston Middle School, William Faulkner Middle School, and Ernest Hemingway Middle School corroborate that. Each principal has improved the atmosphere in his or her building. Two of them made improvements by changing leadership practices and one by keeping what was working, changing where necessary, building on those policies as time went by, and distributing leadership across the staff (Carreno, 2018; Klar et al. 2016; Larsen & Rieckhoff, 2014; Spillane, Camburn, & Pareja, 2007).

As evidenced by these interviews, once these principals were seated and acclimated to their positions, the distributed leadership-based policies they implemented helped to cure student behavior problems within their buildings. As behavior improves, it creates a web, that much like the spreading of distributed leadership across the school, touches every aspect of the school and helps it to improve. When student behavior is improved, teachers can focus on academics.

Hopefully, with this improved focus comes better grades and more academic capacity (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). As grades get better and disruptions fade away, teachers have more time to perfect their craft. The teachers could spend more time focusing on teacher education and building a career as opposed to transferring or finding a job outside of the field of education (Du Plessis & Eberlein, 2018). Also, more time could be spent on instructional leadership instead of helping other teachers to discipline students and deal with these behavior

issues (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018; Bellibas & Liu, 2018; Halverson & Clifford, 2013; Klar, 2012a, 2012b).

This cycle that I describe in the previous paragraph could potentially have a growing spiral effect: behavior continues to improve, teachers become more committed, which leads to less turnover and long-term employment. This long-term employment would allow teachers to grow relationships with families in the community where they would already anticipate teaching the next sibling in the future (Ross, Lutfi, & Hope, 2016). The changed reputation of the school could bring in more resources and more requests by families to put their children in these schools. While all of this is very wishful thinking, as evidenced by what was happening in McCullough County at the time of these interviews, these events are very possible and could spiderweb across these schools and have the positive effects that I am listing in this narrative.

Implications

The purpose of this section is to address the theoretical, practical, and empirical implications of the study. These implications can be helpful to the various stakeholders, not only in the schools in this study, but even generalized to other school districts. Stakeholders may include teachers, administrators, and policy makers.

Theoretical

Numerous theoretical implications arose from this study. First, from conducting the research interviews and reviewing the literature, I believe that the theoretical model of distributed leadership could be strengthened by adding some of the positive aspects of rival theories, which could be implemented in distributed leadership literature and serve as a manual for distributed leadership training. Lamm, Carter, and Lamm (2016) listed a number of characteristics that are found within the body of interpersonal leadership literature. These

characteristics are: (a) communication competence, (b) encouraging innovative thinking, (c) recognizing others, (d) motivating others, (e) supporting others, (f) personal attributes, (g) promoting collective decision making, (h) developing others, (i) managing conflict, (j) fostering happiness, (k) delegating and empowering, and (l) fostering and maintaining good relations (Lamm et al., 2016). Each of these characteristics is also important to the interaction piece of distributed leadership. Training staff members and developing these characteristics within the team will help with a distributed leadership implementation, help new team members within an organization that has already implemented distributed leadership, or serve as personal development to help teachers and other staff members to grow.

In contrast, Sun, Chen, and Zhang (2017) noted some of the leadership practices that are involved in a transformational leadership model. Leadership practices are one of the theoretical pillars of distributed leadership. Distributed leadership theorists could add a list of practices that are generated or should be generated in an organization that has adopted a distributed leadership program. These practices could be labeled as present, achievable, or optimum. This would provide a roadmap for organizations that are just starting out with distributed leadership and provide goals for them to reach and markers to use for self-reflection and grading of their distributed leadership initiative.

Positive aspects of transactional leadership could also be incorporated into the distributed leadership model. Principals, assistant principals, and other staff members could help build the transactional relationship between teachers and students by adding incentives that can be earned through student performance. Finding the best performance/reward balances in the literature and adding them to the distributed leadership model could add to the success of distributed leadership programs and help see an organization to the goal of student learning (Khan, 2017).

Adaptive leadership also has benefits to offer distributed leadership theory. “Adaptive leaders do not just make changes, they carefully recognize potential changes in the external environment and consider the best path that will positively affect the organization” (Khan, 2017, p. 179). Everyone within a distributed leadership framework could be an adaptive leader as well. Principals could do high level analyses of potential threats and challenges. Teachers and subject matter experts could be looking on the horizon to identify changes that are coming within curriculum. All of the stakeholders within a school or county school system would have something to offer to improve the future of the organization and build a stronger framework moving forward.

Practical

Based on the results of this study, I would think that other schools in the district, other schools in Tennessee, or other schools across the country would want to model their distributed leadership program and/or leadership practices after Zora Neale Hurston Middle School and William Faulkner Middle School. County-wide meetings, online discussions, and sharing of success stories in different formats would benefit all the other schools including those that are struggling with behavior or where teachers have indicated that distributed leadership is not present within the school.

Along the same lines, I think it would be a reasonable task to assign someone to go through the literature and create a collection of what has worked as related to distributed leadership. This study indicated that distributed leadership is helping with behavior issues in McCullough County. An extensive search of the literature could produce a catalogue of ideas that further help behavior and help with implementation, academic capacity, teacher retention, and many of the educational issues that were discussed in this study. Looking internally at what

aspects of distributed leadership and the leadership practices within each school that can be attributed with helping with behavior problems could be added to that catalogue of ideas.

Empirical

The participants' responses revealed many of them had not been through distributed leadership training. Some of them were aware that distributed leadership was one of the metrics their principals were graded on, and others were not aware of this. Some of the teachers were also not aware of the three aspects of distributed leadership: leadership practices, interactions, and situations.

A positive aspect of what McCullough County is doing is grading leaders based on distributed leadership and encouraging them to distribute leadership through their schools. McCullough County and other school districts would benefit, however, from training people with leadership titles and their subordinates. The school district and all stakeholders win when teachers and other staff members receive distributed leadership training. Knowing and realizing their superiors are distributing leadership to them and others is one thing, but when teachers and other staff members are trained know the theoretical pillars, and are acquainted with the other aspects of distributed leadership, then a school truly begins to reap the benefits of distributed leadership.

Delimitations and Limitations

This section discusses the delimitations and limitations of the study. "Limitations are external conditions that restrict or constrain the study's scope or may affect its outcome" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 12). Limitations can result from the participants of the study, the research design that is used, the data analysis, or numerous other factors. The first limitation of this study was where it was conducted. From the beginning, I anticipated getting approval from

a school district in my home state of West Virginia. This would have made data collection much easier. Instead, I had to choose between a school district in Tennessee and a charter school district in Florida.

As mentioned previously, I drove over 4,000 miles and spent more than 60 hours behind the wheel of my car to conduct the research for this study. This limited the amount of time that could be spent in the field as I had to take vacation days and schedule them around the availability of teachers that were more than four hours away. As I planned each trip to Tennessee, I made certain that I had two or more appointments so each trip would be as valuable as possible. If a school district closer to me in West Virginia had approved me, I possibly could have conducted more interviews and observed more faculty or academic department meetings.

The second limitation of the study was that McCullough County requires researchers to submit the interview questions for qualitative studies. This makes semi-structured interviews more difficult and not as interactive as they might have been, as I was afraid to deviate in any way or appear to be leading the participants through in-depth, follow up questions.

“Delimitations are conditions or parameters that the researcher intentionally imposes in order to limit the scope of a study (e.g. using participants of certain ages, genders, or groups; conducting the research in a single setting)” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 12). I have read about the original distributed leadership study in several pieces of literature. Spillane and his team looked at the differences between how English departments and math departments were treated from how teachers were promoted in those departments to how resources were obtained for the departments (Diamond & Spillane, 2016).

Having read about the initial distributed leadership study, I chose to incorporate the four core courses into my study: English, math, science, and social studies. One of the participants in

my study has a real heart for special needs children and she made a great sales pitch to me to incorporate special education into my study. However, I stuck to my original delimitation and conducted the study with the four core courses at the forefront.

Another delimitation was conducting this study at only the middle school level. My committee chair told me that most areas of educational research at the middle school level seem to lag behind other educational levels. I was able to find significantly more distributed leadership studies that had been performed at the elementary, high school, and college level than I was able to find about the middle school level. While this did place a delimitation on my study, I thought that it was important to contribute to the gap in the literature at the middle school level and potentially add to the literature in the hopes of improving middle schools in some small way.

Recommendations for Future Research

In light of the study findings, limitations, and the delimitations placed on the study, there are several recommendations for future research. First, regarding the discussions about distributed leadership and behavior, more studies need to be performed at the middle school level to find out how distributed leadership is being used to improve behavior and to potentially discover other methods of behavior control that spring from a distributed leadership program at the middle school level. Teachers with whom I have spoken who were not participants in this study have told me that behavior at the middle school level is an important concern. Some middle school students who have enough cognitive presence and development to be aware of their own behavior issues are even willing to take on commitment devices and suffer self-inflicted punishments for not reaching the behavior goals that they set for themselves (C. Robinson, Pons, Duckworth, & Rogers, 2018). Studies such as this one and the study in the previous citation should lead researchers to want to invest time in further discovering the benefits

to behavior produced by an effective distributed leadership initiative as teachers, parents, students, and all stakeholders in a middle school see the importance of improving behavior at this level.

At the same time, similar studies could be conducted at the elementary and high school levels. First, studies could be conducted to see if similar aspects of distributed leadership initiatives are producing similar results at these levels of education. Ideas for behavior improvement could be generated through similar semi-structured interviews. Second, lists of ideas and initiatives could be compiled that show which of these work at different levels of the education system and with which age groups of students.

Another recommendation for research would be training. It would be interesting to see what type and how much distributed leadership training occurs at each educational level. A comparison of training levels and the perceived benefits of the distributed leadership implementation could provide a good guide for a county or a school as they could see how much time, money, and effort they would need to invest and the approximate results that they might expect for their efforts. Results would obviously vary, but this type of research could be a good rubric to see how and where things went wrong if there were problems in the distributed leadership platform.

McCullough County is a middle-sized county from a population standpoint. Numerous other studies could take place in smaller counties, larger counties, other geographic areas of the United States, and more. Studies could also be done that focus on different demographics that exist within our society. These studies could confirm the findings of this study on a larger scale, could assign the findings as only being valid in a county the size of McCullough County or in a geographic region like the Southeast, or build upon this study in new and unforeseen ways.

Between reading through hundreds of pieces of literature, some qualitative and some quantitative, then conducting a qualitative study such as this, I strongly advocate for future studies to be qualitative in nature. The quantitative studies that I read regarding distributed leadership, while valid, leave much to be desired compared to the rich, descriptive interviews given by the participants of this study. Instead of a checkmark in a list, the participants of this study provided professional and thorough answers to the interview questions that I posed to them. They did this because of the genuine concern that each of them has for children and the obvious love and devotion that they have for the field of education. These factors cannot be brought to light adequately by a survey.

Each interview was a story. Within each of those stories exist gems of experience, wisdom, and new ways of doing things. Surveys are also not able to adequately describe the leadership practices, workplace situations, interactions between administration and staff, and the Leader-Plus concept of distributed leadership the way that qualitative interviews are able to do. A reader could potentially look at the qualitative data that is produced by a study and misinterpret the findings based on not having enough data. However, a study with qualitative interviews produces similar data to the quantitative study but with background information and descriptions that provide a much fuller picture of what is truly going on within a school or a county school system. These are the reasons that qualitative research must lead the way in future studies of distributed leadership.

Summary

This summary contains a restatement of the findings of this study. The most important finding from this study was that multiple teachers credit distributed leadership with improving student behavior and therefore creating an atmosphere where student learning and academics can

be the focus within the classroom. The participants of this study mentioned the word behavior 17 times within the 14 interviews. Two teachers also brought up their concerns about English and math being put before science and social studies, which corroborates with Spillane's original distributed leadership study in Chicago in 2005.

The interviews conducted for this study revealed that teachers need more training on distributed leadership. This was apparent due to their unawareness of distributed leadership concepts during the interviews. Making teachers more aware of distributed leadership would be a big win for each school, McCullough County, or any other educational organization that implements distributed leadership.

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Dear Darrell Ashworth,

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APPENDIX D: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 27, 2019

Darrell M. Ashworth
IRB Approval 3799.062719: A Nested-Case Study Investigating Distributed Leadership at the Middle School Level

Dear Darrell M. Ashworth,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. [45 CFR 46.101\(b\)\(2\)](#) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

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APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Redacted Interview Transcripts in the Order They Were Conducted

1. Please introduce yourself to me and describe your position at the school.

Ok, my name is Cindy and I'm a seventh grade ELA teacher here at Zora Neale Hurston Middle School. I've been here 21 years.

2. Please describe your experiences as far as the leadership practices that you have encountered at this school and within the county.

I've served as a team leader and stepped back down to the classroom just because I had a hard time balancing both of those roles and feeling like I was doing a great job with my kids because I still had to teach a few classes and then be kind of teacher leader, kind of a mid-management helping teachers kind of role. I struggled. I felt like I was...if I was good at one, I was letting the other one fall and so I chose to go back to the classroom full-time, but that was a great leadership experience for me getting to go in and work with other teachers and just seeing how people do things differently, and getting different ideas, and trying to encourage other teachers. So, I really liked that part of it. I've also served as a department chair. So, I've had some experience as far as being one of the leaders of this school. Looking on the other side of it and looking at the leaders of our school, I would say that my experiences have all been pretty positive interactions with other leaders in our school. We have mentor teachers, of course our AP, and our principal and I feel like they are all very supportive, very teacher-oriented, and student-centered and want to do the best for our classrooms. So, I feel very good on our building level of our leadership.

3. Please describe some of the workplace situations that have been catalysts for change in leadership practices.

I would definitely say when we brought in the TAP program and it gave us an opportunity for teachers to take on that leadership role without leaving the classroom, that definitely changed the dynamics of our whole school and it really gave a lot of teachers who wanted that...a little bit more of the leadership opportunity, but not to totally lose base with the students. It gave them a little more of that chance to kind of keep that mid-range going, but still take on more responsibility, more leadership. Our tests scores, I mean obviously, it all comes down to what you're doing on paper with data and test scores. For a while, when I first started here at this school, we were kind of at the bottom of the barrel and we were trying to work our way out. So our principal at the time, Ms. Stockton, heard about the TAP program and thought it might be something that we would want to investigate. She actually...her leadership style, she actually brought a group of teachers into kind of go research it and find out about it. She didn't just say we're going to do this. She wanted it to be kind of our decision of this is what we need to do as a

school. So, when we saw, how effective it was and what it did for schools we voted. She actually...we had to have a majority vote, maybe 75 or 80%. So, we voted as a staff to do that. I guess, really, I think when we started that and kind of a change in leadership shifted to where it was...when I first started it was like the principal and she is going to do...make all of the decisions and that's it. I saw a shift in our school to more of a...these teacher leaders coming forward and saying hey, you know...I don't know, just feeling more confident and saying this is what we need to do for our kids. So, I saw a lot more of that when we shifted into the TAP program and I guess the basis of it started with wanting our test scores to be better, which it did happen. We won awards and we've really shifted in that direction.

4. Please describe how you perceive interactions between leaders and followers within your school.

That's an interesting question. I think it's so individualized depending on the dynamics...that relationship is so important and I think if that leader is trying to be a servant leader they get a lot of cooperation, they get a lot of like yes, yes, yes. I don't think really in our school we have a lot of people kicked back saying I'm...I think everybody pretty much cooperates and tries to stay pretty positive with things, but I do feel like we have some mentors that are just willing to go the extra mile and show that I'm a leader not just in title, but my actions prove it. People will just do so much for them and try anything that they request. I kind of see that a little bit more. I've seen the opposite too. I've seen a few leaders, teacher leaders, mentors where the relationship wasn't there to begin with as far as the trust which is huge. If they feel like that leader is kind of out to get them or throw them under the bus they're just very reserved and that mentor can't get very far with that teacher. They kind of put up a wall. So, I've seen both. I would say in our school, I see more of the positives. I hate to make it sound like our school is just like Disney World or something, Everything is not perfect, but my perception of it is that most of the people that I'm around...I feel like they are pretty positive with leadership in general at our school.

5. How about within other schools in the county?

I know two teachers at another middle school, so when TAP went away, but we had the same kind of evaluation system that came from the TAP rubric and it went to these other schools and kind of the same structure, I found it very interesting that a lot of those schools didn't receive it very well all. Like a lot of them felt like it was Big Brother is watching me, they're out to get me, they're out to find everything I do wrong. So, I felt like, when we started TAP here at Zora Neale and that whole evaluation system and the support system, it was more of, you know, we're just trying to do the best for our kids, we're trying to help each other. That was kind of the mindset, but then in other schools I'd see them take that same structure and it was perceived as everybody is out to get me, I'm being thrown under the bus and it just took a whole negative turn sometimes I saw and that really surprised me. I think that just goes to show, it's all about how it starts like

how it's presented in the very beginning. I think our leadership, when we started TAP, was very good at explaining and making people buy-in to we're doing this to better our kids and ourselves and it's not about getting anybody. So, definitely, I see that aspect. I think other schools, I mean I've heard people kind of feel like their principals are not really...don't have their backs sometimes and I just feel like we have it good here.

6. Please describe how you see yourself as an educational leader.

This is kind of changed through the years. When I did the team leader thing and it was kind of stated leadership role and I always wanted it to be an encouragement kind of position...help, serving...that's how I saw me as a leader and I think now that I've stepped down from that and gone back to the classroom only, now it's more of a...I think I lead by my attitude with the people I'm around. I lead by trying to problem solve with my team and so I'm not a stated leader anymore, but I feel like I do contribute to my team in a lot of ways that are just kind of under the current and they're not just the flashy like making the decisions, but trying to keep everybody kind of working together. That's huge for me. I love a team that will work together. I hate division in teams. Our 7th grade team, they are so awesome.

7. Please describe how you fit into the leadership network of the county school system? Or is there is an opportunity for a leadership role outside of your classroom?

I have led some PDs district-wide...things like that. I've kind of weighed my options of which direction do I want to go with this? Do I want to be a team leader again or stay in the classroom? Do I want to try to do something different? Because you know, when you've taught 21 years you starting thinking well, ok, is this...am I going to be one of these...40 years I've been in the classroom and that's very commendable or do I want to try to change things more on a county level? I think either one is very commendable to be honest.

8. Please describe your experiences with distributed leadership while in this position.

I think right now, well our school, since we started with TAP, and even though TAP is not here anymore, it changed our culture of...I feel like we definitely get a lot of opportunities as a 7th grade team. Different committees and groups get a lot of say so in what happens here. Mr. Hyacinth is our leader and he points us in the direction and I think a lot of times he will say this is the direction we need to go, this is what we need to do, and then let's people figure out what are some ways we can get there. I feel like we get a lot of say so in that. It's not just kind of like this is what we're doing you know.

9. How would you describe distributed leadership's influence on the subject that you teach?

Well, that one's interesting. I have found that English Language Arts people are a little more rigid and want to be a little bit more like...I'm not sure if I'm saying this politically correct, but sometimes they're a little bit more, you know, want things a certain way and sometimes they're not as flexible. I'll just put it that way I'll say. It's not that it's not there as far as distributed leadership, but I feel like kind of in this department there's less in ELA just because...I think maybe the subject itself kind of makes people feel that way more like, you know, social studies a little freer and like we'll give people more control and power. Now, as far as school-based, they do on a district level, they do give us a lot of freedom in what we choose to read and build our modules for ELA so we do have a lot of freedom as a school from the district.

10. Please describe how you see distributed leadership influencing other subjects within your school.

It's kind of interesting, I think, it really takes on the personality of whoever is department chair at the time. So, whatever the personality and the attitude that the department chair has, they kind of bring that to that subject. That's kind of an interesting thought really. Some of those people like, I see our science person is very like free and so she's kind of very open to bring your ideas and everybody come and...she's very open. I'd say, really, probably social studies is a lot like that too. I'm not as familiar with math in general, like what happens in math and how that plays out. I think overall our school...we have a say so and we have a voice no matter what. I think you might have degrees of how much your voice is heard and taken into account depending on your subject area. Like I said, I kind of feel like ELA is a little bit more...wants to be a little more controlled and make sure we're doing the right thing.

11. Describe how you perceive the implementation of distributed leadership at your school.

Well, like I said, when we started kind of the whole process that led us to having this type of leadership, we voted. It was actually a vote which not a lot of the same staff are here now, but we voted and agreed. To be honest, I feel like when it started and I don't know, this might not be really the politically correct answer, Ms. Stockton, when it started and we voted to start the program, she did kind of have some people she wanted to be in those roles and actually, to think about it, I might not have at that time, I might not have put myself in that role of leadership had she not kind of nudged me and said "You would be great at this. You need to do this." I think she wanted people who were not going to be intimidated by them, you know, coming into their classrooms and leading these meetings and she wanted a friendly face. So, she kind of pushed certain people at that point a little bit...kind of like why don't you try this...why don't you try that? So, I don't think there's as much of that now. I think it's more of the by the book, you know, you apply and you know, it's all based on who does the best in the interview, but I do think when we first started, some of that happened more out of trying to get the right people in place

so that the program would work and people wouldn't be scared by shared leadership of the school and thinking oh, now we've got all of these people out to get us.

12. Please tell me about how you would implement distributed leadership differently in your school or if leadership may be missing something that could have been a beneficial influence(s) on the subject that you teach.

Well, I think it's worked really well for us. I say that because a lot of our leaders that have been here and been teacher leaders, they've actually gone on and they're principals now at other schools or they're system wide coaches or they're whatever and they started here and I'm not talking like just a handful. I'm talking about a ton. If you went and looked at the number, there are like a ton of teachers that I've worked with 20 years here that are now in all these places. So, that kind of speaks to the success of the model that came through here that these people were able to move to other things that they wanted to do and they're being very successful with it. So, I think that's kind of telling of that we were doing something the right way for them to be able to do that. I just think something you have to have. . . I don't know that it's missing in our subject area, but you do have to have trust in people and that's huge...to really give somebody that leadership role and let them make decisions and let them lead people, you have to kind of take your hands off the wheel and give them that you trust them to make the right decisions.

13. Please describe how teacher leaders are chosen at your school.

It's very kind of cut and dried process I would say as far as the actual...if you want an actual title of leader, a team leader or a department chair. Team leader, it's actually an application process through McCullough County and they do an interview and they choose. We've had the same team leaders for a few years now just because they've been serving. If they want to go back to the classroom or if they move up or whatever then there's an opening for other people within the school. It's a pretty fair process. Then, department chairs, they are pretty much serving until either they don't want to or they are...I mean, I haven't seen anybody be removed as department chair per say. Those kinds of leaders are chosen by the administration team and then...you know, it sounds corny, but we just have so many other types of leaders here that do so many things in our school and I don't know that they're chosen, they just kind of step up to the challenge of what needs to be done at the time and they take on that leadership even though they may not have that title.

14. Please share your perceptions of how teacher leaders are identified within other subjects in your school.

It's pretty much the same way. It's not different.

15. Please describe the differences that you see in identifying teacher leaders within the subject you teach and other subjects within your school.

I think it's pretty much the same depending...I don't think that it really changes as far as a school level because, like I said the admin team kind of chooses if they're department chairs or whatever and then there's a process if you're going to be a team leader no matter what.

16. Please describe how distributed leadership has changed the academic capacity for the subject you teach at your school.

Well, I think because we've had some team leaders that were kind of specifically coming with that ELA mindset. They can really help...you can kind of get some more specific help feedback depending on if that's somebody's specialty. I think that's useful, because sometimes it's useful just to have the general strategies to help with kids, but then having that specific ELA can be helpful too sometimes.

17. Please share your perceptions of how distributed leadership has changed the overall academic capacity at your school.

Oh, it's huge. I don't think we would be the school we are today if we had not made the decision to do that because it took so many people to contribute to get us where we are. I think back when we made this decision, if it had just been on Ms. Stockton's shoulders and the APs to get it all done, we'd still be stuck I feel like. I think that was the turning point for this school. I really think it was.

18. Please describe how you see distributed leadership's influence(s) on the overall climate within your school.

I think that the climate within our school is a pretty positive one, I feel like, because you see people taking on those leadership roles throughout the building. It's not just one section, one place, the office, or here, it's throughout the building you see leaders out and about helping. I think that's the key. They are servant leaders. They are in the trenches helping. I think that builds more of that climate when you see someone who is a leader, but they're a servant leader and they're doing things to make your day to day job better and make you more effective and help you to be more effective, then the climate is going to increase. If those leaders are just sitting in an office somewhere and they are not really impacting you day to day, I don't think it impacts the climate. It may even have a negative impact on the climate if they are doing that, but I feel like for our school, we definitely have the opposite of that.

19. Please describe how leadership at your school searches for resources to benefit academic achievement within your school.

Our team leaders, they have a little bit of extra time built into their schedule to do those kinds of things. So, when I was a part of the leadership team, we would kind of divide up and each be in charge of certain aspects. We would look at data and say these are the top three things we need for this school year. This is still what they do. That is their job to go find what strategies...what do we need and they bring it back and they field test it or check to see if this is really legitimate. Is this going to work?

20. How does leadership at your school search for resources to benefit academic achievement within the subject that you teach?

I think we get a lot more stuff kind of handed down I guess through the ELA department which can be good. I do think sometimes if they are handing things down to all the schools and we're just taking that, I think we have to tailor it to our kids. Not everything that they throw out there is going to be good for everybody because schools can be so different. We do kind of talk through some things during our department meetings and kind of say well we should try this or maybe not. I think probably through our department meetings, we kind of filter some of that as well.

21. How does leadership search for resources to benefit academic achievement within other subjects at your school?

I would say it is through the department chairs a lot as well. The team leaders, like I said, they are looking more for...they can be subject specific if there is something that they know a teacher needs help with. So, it really can be the team leaders too, but I think through our department chairs and those teacher leaders is where we get a lot of that.

22. Please share with me anything else that you feel could be beneficial to the current study regarding distributed leadership, leadership within the subject you teach, and identifying leadership within that field of study.

I just think that distributed leadership, like I said, I've seen it be a key to changing this school, but I think that was because it was done in a certain way and it was done in a non-threatening way and it was done with people being onboard with it, but in buying into the concept and it was done by choosing leaders that were not intimidating, that were servant leaders. I think that's key. I think if it is done in a way where people feel like big brother has multiplied and now all these people are trying to tell me what to do, I can just see it going south very quickly. I just feel like if it is done correctly it can make a huge difference for a school climate.

1. Please introduce yourself to me and describe your position at the school.

My name is Sally. I'm a 6th grade Language Arts teacher here at Ernest Hemingway Middle School

2. Please describe your experiences as far as the leadership practices that you have encountered at this school and within the county.

My most familiar interaction with leadership has been with my immediate supervisors...my... we have 6th grade principals and so my interactions have been with them and the lead principal. The head principal I don't see quite as often. Most of the leadership comes from them and then within the county. I meet with all of the Language Arts teachers for secondary English, so it's all middle school/high school across the county and so meeting with our supervisor and meeting with those teachers, that's my chance to see leadership and then bring it back to school and share it.

3. Please describe some of the workplace situations that have been catalysts for change in leadership practices.

We have team leaders on our teams and so that's the four core teachers: science, social studies, English Language Arts, and math, and so they'll come to us with stuff that's come from the principals and so we'll talk about it and make decisions. Sometimes we disagree with what we've been told that we have to do and so we bring it back. What our concerns are, but that's who we're supposed to send/channel our issues through. So, if we do have an issue, then we are supposed to send it through our team leader who goes back to our administration.

4. Please describe how you perceive interactions between leaders and followers within your school.

I think this year is the first year that they've really tried to pay attention to teachers as leaders. It used to just be department chairs, administrators, and that's it. Now they have representatives. Teachers got to select a representative that meets, I think it's every month or maybe it's bimonthly, but they meet every month to kind of voice concerns and they are our voice and so they've taken...but that's just this year and I've been here for a while. So, it used to just be the administrators would kind of top down with what we needed to do.

5. How about within other schools in the county?

I'm not really sure how the other schools are. I've only been at this school. So, I don't have much experience with other schools.

6. Please describe how you see yourself as an educational leader.

This is my 13th year teaching and so I think my experience has made me an educational leader. You know, my coworkers will come to me and I know how the school works and new teachers can come and ask questions and so I think just experience helps with that.

7. Please describe how you fit into the leadership network of the county school system? Or is there is an opportunity for a leadership role outside of your classroom?

I'm lucky that I was selected to be to in a leadership role. This is my 3rd year in that role. Outside of that, I knew that there was a team leader on each team which is nice. So there is that chance, I know that they're trying to open more leadership positions for teachers within this school to make us feel like we have a voice. But there's definitely leadership opportunities.

8. Please describe your experiences with distributed leadership while in this position.

When I started there was only one 6th grade principal and one principal and so it was very clear cut. Now, for several years we've had two. So the dynamic between the two principals for 6th grade has been interesting because I feel like their personalities are different and so the same issue that you bring up would be handled differently...and then within having different team leaders, I was on a different team and the way that team leader ran things was different so that interaction has changed as well depending on who is in charge.

9. How would you describe distributed leadership's influence on the subject that you teach?

We have a literacy coach and so I feel like she is also a leader. She goes to every grade level's PLC. She gives us advice and sometimes gives us directions from the county so I see her as a leadership role that's specific. I know that they have math coaches as well.

10. Please describe how you see distributed leadership influencing other subjects within your school.

I know administrators have to go to the PLC, that is Professional Learning Community, they have to go and oversee and make sure that they're collaborating well and it's across grade levels. Also, we do some vertical planning so you might have the 8th and the 7th together, but that's usually supervised by somebody....but that's... I can't really speak other than Language Arts, but I know math has a coach too. So, I'm sure that role is important there.

11. Describe how you perceive the implementation of distributed leadership at your school.

I mean, we have a handbook and so I think they tried to outline what the roles are. They have the little chart, the flowchart....here's this person, here's who you report to for this, here's who you report to that, when they meet, how often the meetings are, what their names are. So I feel like it is very well outlined and that's available to all staff at all times and it's a document that can change so I feel like that they are trying to do a good job spreading it out like if you're a department chair you can't be...you can't have the role of something else so they try to limit it.

12. Please tell me about how you would implement distributed leadership differently in your school or if leadership may be missing something that could have been a beneficial influence(s) on the subject that you teach.

I mean, I think we are lucky that we have a literacy coach. I think it is kind of like we're being selfish though cause you write in social studies and so why can't they reach out and help there and then for the science teachers. Could they benefit from the math? I think putting a lot of emphasis on certain subjects...can be, it kind of shows favoritism. So, I mean math and reading are important, but so are science and social studies and what are you, what message are you sending when you don't support them equally? So that's something that I've kind of wondered about or noticed and its true on state testing too as you notice which subjects count and which don't.

13. Please describe how teacher leaders are chosen at your school.

The teacher leaders...sometimes they are just selected. My principal asked me to be in leadership so sometimes it's the administration selecting. Like I said, we did get to vote on a, I think they call it a council leader. It's basically a big committee that includes that teacher representation. With your team, it depends on like what roles we are already in but then we select based on experience so that's a factor when selecting a team leader.

14. Please share your perceptions of how teacher leaders are identified within other subjects in your school.

There is a department head within the school....and, I don't think they overtake anything. I think they just kind of get the lay of the land from what the other people in the county are doing and then they just share it with their department so there's not a whole lot of crossing subject areas. It is not very cross-curricular. As far as planning and leadership, we do not cross paths often.

15. Please describe the differences that you see in identifying teacher leaders within the subject you teach and other subjects within your school.

I am not entirely sure. I'm assuming that they select them based on experience, test scores....I'm not entirely sure how they do it and the....and the people that have been department chairs have been it for years now. So, they've been here and they've been teaching for a while. But, I can't really speak to that. I'm not sure how they select them cause it was the principal that did mine.

16. Please describe how distributed leadership has changed the academic capacity for the subject you teach at your school.

Well, that is why we have a literacy coach. We had previously bad reading test scores. A lot of our kids read below grade level and so the county has provided the salary for a full-time instructional literacy coach for English language arts which is what I teach...and I know what they have for math is they have two part-time math coaches. So, I think their pay is a little different, but they are still in the building a certain number of days, but they are not full-time, they are considered part-time.

17. Please share your perceptions of how distributed leadership has changed the overall academic capacity at your school.

We have had some good testing years. I know they focus on academics. We have a lot of data crunching at the beginning of the year when the TCAP scores come in. We have principals that pulled us into meetings as a grade level so our whole grade level would sit down and we'd look at data and we'd talk about how many kids we need to move and how....what our areas of growth are and then we do the same thing with our kids. We look at, hey here is what you scored in 5th grade and here's where we're going to set some goals to try to move forward. So, , it's coming from the administration kind of breaking it down before we see it.

18. Please describe how you see distributed leadership's influence(s) on the overall climate within your school.

We have had a lot of rough behavior over the years especially when I started. Lots of suspensions, lots of kids getting kicked out, lots of bad behavior problems and it affected, like people did not respect the principals, the kids didn't, the teachers didn't. We had a lot of teacher turnover. I think we lost like 50 teachers in one year. It was ridiculous. So, bringing in a solid head principal is the main thing. Like that changed everything and then the people underneath him and the people underneath them... just making sure that the staff, everybody was good. I mean, we kind of flushed out some of those not so good teachers and that was all the administrators doing that.

19. Please describe how leadership at your school searches for resources to benefit academic achievement within your school.

I know that they do some academically focused, like literacy nights where they have resources for the parents, they have resources for grandparents cause we have a lot of grandparents that are in the role of guardian. The community is very supportive of our school and they've worked on that and built those relationships, but I know they do it.

20. How does leadership at your school search for resources to benefit academic achievement within the subject that you teach?

I know that training and conferences...they seek out those resources to prepare teachers so that the teachers can then affect the students. We offer tutoring and so sometimes we have outside people that do that.

21. How does leadership search for resources to benefit academic achievement within other subjects at your school?

I know there is a math night. Gosh, I don't know how much support science and...so, I don't, I think the after-school stuff is all the...I'm not sure about additional resources that they have for them.

22. Please share with me anything else that you feel could be beneficial to the current study regarding distributed leadership, leadership within the subject you teach, and identifying leadership within that field of study.

I think starting at the top and then making sure you have a lot of representation you have a lot of people in the role of leader. That way it does not feel so much like a dictatorship. It feels like you have a say. So having the faculty meetings, having opportunities for teachers to share or having an outlet or someone that they are able to share with who can bring it to the administration because I know when I started it was super frustrating because we didn't feel like we were heard and issues weren't being addressed, so yeah.

1. Please introduce yourself to me and describe your position at the school.

I'm Alaina. I am an 8th grade science teacher at Ernest Hemingway Middle School.

2. Please describe your experiences as far as the leadership practices that you have encountered at this school and within the county

At this school....well, I should preface...this is my first year with McCullough County so some of my experiences are limited. So at this school I have noticed that many of the practices...they are really, you know, the style is more transformational...and the practices here at this school they are implementing more of distributed leadership so there are many more opportunities for the staff to participate and be at a higher level of stakeholder in the school for a change.

3. Please describe some of the workplace situations that have been catalysts for change in leadership practices.

I noticed that part...that's really I can tell like just learning....that is a huge piece that they are implementing here....and, within the county, I cannot speak county wide because I am learning but that seems to be what they are trending toward. Once again, it's just from learning from past and what has been a catalyst for now. It is one...behavior based...trying to improve behavior so seeking information and really trying to promote change within that...positive behavior change and also academic growth. Really trying to urge students to grow not be perfect. Those seem to be the two factors that have been the catalysts.

4. Please describe how you perceive interactions between leaders and followers within your school.

I perceive it to be very positive and productive. I feel like voices are heard. I feel like respect is reciprocated and there is a high degree of professionalism that is awesome for education.

5. How about within other schools in the county?

Just because I am, you know, peripherally associated with Edgar Allan Poe Middle School I can speak of that. I see it being the same there. I cannot generalize outside of that because I am new and I would not want to speak outside of that.

6. Please describe how you see yourself as an educational leader.

I really try to work on being a transformational leader also. I really try to take into the whole scope of the vision and seek input and grow. It's always a growth mindset because we always want to be better really in every facet and it takes the whole team to make that occur.

7. Please describe how you fit into the leadership network of the county school system? Or is there is an opportunity for a leadership role outside of your classroom?

As far as the county school system, I am not sure yet. I am working on that and I try to assist and help in any form or fashion I can within the school because I really...I enjoy the facet of change management because I think we always....the paradigm shifts in education are huge. We are always changing and evolving for the better. So, I do try to be involved in that and once again I do feel like my voice is heard and there is a professional reciprocation of ideas here.

8. Please describe your experiences with distributed leadership while in this position.

Well, my experiences have been positive. I feel like there are many facets here to participate and get involved in this school in different ways whether it is positive behavior or just incentive groups that attempt to shift classroom behaviors in a more positive direction.

9. How would you describe distributed leadership's influence on the subject that you teach?.

I think indirectly...I think we all benefit especially when you talk about the behavior piece. The demographics of this school is interesting. So, I definitely receive indirect influence from that because there are many focus some rewards. programs, anywhere from academic to behavior, tutoring...there are many opportunities to become involved. So, it's there.

10. Please describe how you see distributed leadership influencing other subjects within your school.

I would say it is a lot of indirect...just the way in my classroom...there are some focus groups that are specific for our reading literacy and also numerical literacy. They get a little more direct impact because that is part of our growth initiatives also.

11. Describe how you perceive the implementation of distributed leadership at your school.

It is in the formative stages. We are working toward really, truly applying it. So, it is formative this year.

12. Please tell me about how you would implement distributed leadership differently in your school or if leadership may be missing something that could have been a beneficial influence(s) on the subject that you teach.

I don't think I can give valuable input on this as, you know, I am learning the school, I am learning the standards, I'm learning so many different pieces. I think what is being put in place is extremely valuable but like I said it is formative and as we form all of the pieces that are necessary then I think I would have a better answer to this. So, I apologize.

13. Please describe how teacher leaders are chosen at your school.

The teacher leaders are chosen by...there is a set of criteria. You have to meet the criteria. You really put your own name in a hat knowing that you have to meet those criteria and you have to go through an interview process. So, I do think it's done in a very non-biased way because if you really don't meet that criteria then you really can't apply and be interviewed for those positions. So, it's not a favoritism thing. It's really just a...here's the criteria. Can you participate or not? So it's....I like it.

14. Please share your perceptions of how teacher leaders are identified within other subjects in your school.

Once again, I think it's done very fairly. It's all the same. All teacher leaders are done the exact same way.

15. Please describe the differences that you see in identifying teacher leaders within the subject you teach and other subjects within your school.

There is no difference.

16. Please describe how distributed leadership has changed the academic capacity for the subject you teach at your school.

There has been no change yet.

17. Please share your perceptions of how distributed leadership has changed the overall academic capacity at your school.

No change yet because it is very formative.

18. Please describe how you see distributed leadership's influence(s) on the overall climate within your school.

I do think it is already impacted the climate because it has turned more to an academic focus. There's already a focus on learning and the students have already seen that there is a growth mindset toward learning so that is already very positive.

19. Please describe how leadership at your school searches for resources to benefit academic achievement within your school.

It comes through our professional learning communities or PLC meetings, where we can share resources and we can identify where our academic needs are and we share them all on that platform. And, so, I look at it as our PLC leaders, they do that with us and it is a shared event.

20. How does leadership at your school search for resources to benefit academic achievement within the subject that you teach?

Once again through the PLC and it's a collaborative effort. We search all sorts of stuff whether it's an online resource, a resource that we have, and both of those, you know, go together. It's the PLC and the collaborative effort within our meetings.

21. How does leadership search for resources to benefit academic achievement within other subjects at your school?

I don't know because I'm very subject specific on that because we all have individual meetings with our PLCs.

22. Please share with me anything else that you feel could be beneficial to the current study regarding distributed leadership, leadership within the subject you teach, and identifying leadership within that field of study.

Well, the only thing that I think I could add is that I do think that our distributed leadership pieces that are put into place because they are formative are trending in the right direction to impact our school in a positive way...for not only behavior but also academic growth which is our goal. The leadership within the subject that I teach is the support and the research is phenomenal. I feel like we have tons of support and anything that we need. I don't know how to identify anything else in the leadership within the field of study. We always want things. That is the nature of science.

1. Please introduce yourself to me and describe your position at the school.

I'm Patty and I teach 7th grade science at Zora Neale Hurston Middle School

2. Please describe your experiences as far as the leadership practices that you have encountered at this school and within the county.

Well, I don't have much with the county, but at this school we have a leadership team and they have monthly at least meetings if not more and then we as a whole have meetings and we do the stuff that they think would be best for us to do at that point for whatever our goal is.

3. Please describe some of the workplace situations that have been catalysts for change in leadership practices.

Well we've had two principals since I've worked here and this is my seventh year teaching. So, when new principals come in they might change their leadership practices. I think our current principal kept it similar to how the previous one had it. I know there has been some change in the members of the leadership team. As for specific situations that have happened, there are none that I'm fully aware of other than potentially McCullough County's push for each elementary...no, not elementary...each middle and high school to have a specific structure in place.

4. Please describe how you perceive interactions between leaders and followers within your school.

I feel like most of us are pretty comfortable with the leadership team. Some people are a little intimidated by them, but our leadership team is very forthcoming. They just want to help. They are not here to judge or make any decisions on our worth as a teacher. They just want to help us to get better. So, I've had positive interactions. They don't seem standoffish. They don't consider themselves to be better than us. So, it is a pretty positive environment.

5. How about within other schools in the county?

I haven't had any experience with other schools in the county. I've heard talk about other schools not being as cohesive and easy to get along with as our school. I feel like our school is a really good one when it comes to community and getting along with each other...leadership and just team level wise.

6. Please describe how you see yourself as an educational leader.

Well, I'm a team leader, but I'm not on the schoolwide level. Things like that. I guess that's all I have.

7. Please describe how you fit into the leadership network of the county school system? Or is there is an opportunity for a leadership role outside of your classroom?

I guess team leader would fall under that as well so there would be like our principals, our leadership team, and then team leader. So, I'm one of three team leaders. Outside of the classroom, if a lead teacher leaves, they open up that position for inside interviews and outside interviews, but that's only happened once since I've been here and at that point I wasn't really looking to be a lead teacher so I haven't pursued those opportunities.

8. Please describe your experiences with distributed leadership while in this position.

I guess it would be through our monthly meetings now because they have their meetings and they decide what they think we need to work towards and they find strategies to put in place and then they present those strategies to us at our monthly meetings and then I have access to all of the lead teachers at any point in time. I work with one of them, Sylvia, she's one of the lead teachers. She has come in a couple of times. So, they are all really positive and willing to help and they want to come in and see how you're doing. So, I've asked them to come in. They've asked if they can come in and watch and just give feedback. So, it's been a pretty positive interaction.

9. How would you describe distributed leadership's influence on the subject that you teach?

I don't think it's very specified. They look more for strategies that can be beneficial to all subject levels. I know that they do try to provide specific examples for math, science, social studies, and English just so we can see what it would look like for us, but as for specifically influencing science itself, I don't really think they focus primarily on that.

10. Please describe how you see distributed leadership influencing other subjects within your school.

I'd say it's probably the same. Like I said, they try to find strategies that can work in all subject levels and they'll try to provide us with an example to go off of, but as for specific subject influencing, I don't think they focus on that.

11. Describe how you perceive the implementation of distributed leadership at your school.

Well, I know that there was a little bit of a, not really an issue, but when the lead teacher position did become available there was a lapse in communication so some people were applying when the position had already been filled because it was like, the position had been filled before they actually posted it. So, sometimes there's a little bit of that, but I don't think that happens all the time and I don't think it was really an intentional slight. I think it was just somebody who had expressed wanting to be in that role and they had kind of already decided that that would be a good spot for that person.

12. Please tell me about how you would implement distributed leadership differently in your school or if leadership may be missing something that could have been a beneficial influence(s) on the subject that you teach.

I honestly couldn't say how I would do it differently because I am not a teacher whose goal is to move into leadership. It's just not....my role is in the classroom. That's where I need to be. I don't want to be assistant principal or principal. I like being team leader. At some point I might decide to be a lead teacher, but as for how they decide to do it, I don't think I have enough experience to say how it should be done differently.

13. Please describe how teacher leaders are chosen at your school.

I feel like that has to do more with if you express a want to do it. They don't like force anybody into a role that they don't want. They ask you if it's something you would be interested in. They look at your experience and what you can bring to the table and if it's a good fit then they would choose you. I don't think it's favoritism more so than it's just this person really wants to do it. They've taken these steps to do it so they would probably be a better fit than someone who doesn't really want to be in that role.

14. Please share your perceptions of how teacher leaders are identified within other subjects in your school.

I think that has a lot to do with...we have PLCs every month where we meet with our team members so like I would just meet with Sylvia because we are the 7th grade science team, but our leadership members, they come in and they listen to us talk and discuss and talk about what we want and I think some of that would dictate whom they would see as potentially wanting to be a leader or who could be good in a leadership role. So, some of it comes from that. I think some of it would come from seeking out information. If you don't know something and you go to ask them they might see that as initiative. So, possibly that would be a way that they look at identifying teacher leaders.

15. Please describe the differences that you see in identifying teacher leaders within the subject you teach and other subjects within your school.

I don't really see a difference because I feel like they try to make it around to all the different subjects. They don't go to science every month. They don't go to ELA every month. They really do try to cycle through all of them so that they can see the teachers and not the subjects themselves. So, I don't think it's really subject specific.

16. Please describe how distributed leadership has changed the academic capacity for the subject you teach at your school.

I think our leadership team does a great job at finding new lenses for us to look through to give kids the content. They are constantly looking at best practices and things that have been shown to improve scores and we work on those as schoolwide goals and in our monthly meetings they put those ideas out there and give us examples of things that we can do. So, while it's not specific to science they do give us tools that we can use to help give the kids more information and ways they can retain it and any time I have a question or need something my TPAC coach or my mentor or Sylvia, they're all very willing to help me find them or give me information that they may already have.

17. Please share your perceptions of how distributed leadership has changed the overall academic capacity at your school.

I think it's had a positive impact. I know some teachers get a little offended when people try to tell them how to do their job, but I think it's not coming from that point of view. It's coming from here's what we've learned, here's what we see best practices are. These are tools to help you become a better educator. So, I think it's been positive about improving that.

18. Please describe how you see distributed leadership's influence(s) on the overall climate within your school.

Positive again. We've had some bumps in the road, but they really do try to create a climate where we're all accepted and we feel like it's not wasting our time to do these things. They don't just pick random things. They really do back it up with data and evidence that they've seen that these are practices that would be worth our time.

19. Please describe how leadership at your school searches for resources to benefit academic achievement within your school.

I know that they go to a lot of different conferences. They've sent, not even just leadership team, but groups of teachers they've sent to different conferences just throughout this year to find resources. I know that they go to principal meetings on a monthly basis. I know that the membership, the leadership team, they do their meetings, they really do look for conferences and just different things like that they can go and find information for us.

20. How does leadership at your school search for resources to benefit academic achievement within the subject that you teach?

I guess they just look for ways that it could be adapted to science. Again, I don't think they look specifically for science resources, but they do look for resources that could be adapted to help me within science. I know if it would come across the table as something that would be good they would might show interest in it, but I don't know that they specifically look for science.

21. How does leadership search for resources to benefit academic achievement within other subjects at your school?

Same. They just look at what would be beneficial that could be modified for all subjects instead of one specific, but again if they see something that would be just for ELA then they won't completely ignore it, like they might mention it to the ELA teachers and see if it is something that they might be interested in doing.

22. Please share with me anything else that you feel could be beneficial to the current study regarding distributed leadership, leadership within the subject you teach, and identifying leadership within that field of study.

I think it's important for leadership teams to be made up of different people from different contents and different backgrounds and I think our leadership team has done a great job of that. They're all part of the leadership team so they get the perspective of the whole and not just of everybody that's just from ELA or everybody that's just from science. So, I think it's important that leadership teams be made up of people that have those different backgrounds so that they can best distribute information that they feel like needs to be distributed to the members of the school.

1. Please introduce yourself to me and describe your position at the school.

My name is Sabrina. I'm a sixth-grade social studies teacher at William Faulkner Middle School.

2. Please describe your experiences as far as the leadership practices that you have encountered at this school and within the county.

Ok, so, at this school it's actually the reason why I stuck with this school. I'm certified 6th through 12th grade and I would prefer to be teaching high school. However I was an intern last year and so, I got some experience at this school and the administration here, the leadership roles here are fantastic. I've not experienced anything like that before. They're very....they back up their teachers very well. They handle situations as quickly as possible. Incredibly friendly. Very involved with the staff. As far as the county goes, I've not seen personally too much interaction aside from introductions at certain conventions, at, you know, district learning days.

3. Please describe some of the workplace situations that have been catalysts for change in leadership practices.

I've only been here for a year and half, actually,....yeah it'd be a year and a half, so I haven't seen too much big changes within the administration. From what I've heard, it's a huge change. We're seeing more clubs and things of that nature, more student extracurricular things coming up now that we didn't have previously or that's kind of getting revived which is a big change which is really good. They're trying to revive teacher morale too so they're trying to come up with some things for teachers like, you know, maybe a pizza party or things of that nature that's trying to get kind of revived so we've got more nonacademic things coming up that's kind of changed I guess since....what it was before and I am seeing those changes.

4. Please describe how you perceive interactions between leaders and followers within your school.

Very family like. So, we generally speaking will have the administration's or any of our teacher mentors' personal numbers so if we ever need something immediately and we can't do it through email, we can actually personally text them not just use like school phones and things of that nature and get attention real quick. Always very friendly. Never feel like...I always feel like they are the leaders but never feel like they're looking down at any of the teachers or anything of that nature. It's a very, very comfortable environment.

5. How about within other schools in the county?

I've not worked with other schools in the county. I've met some of the other principals, some of the other administrations, through things like interviews or through some of these district learning days. It's a little bit different than the environment here.

6. Please describe how you see yourself as an educational leader.

This is my first full year here so I'm kind of getting guided into that leadership position.

7. Please describe how you fit into the leadership network of the county school system? Or is there is an opportunity for a leadership role outside of your classroom?

Not that I am aware of.

8. Please describe your experiences with distributed leadership while in this position.

So, distributed leadership...we have our three administrators, two assistant principals and a head principal and then if we have a mix match of that they do have some reliable teachers or staff members that they do pass down the role to, but for the most part those top three generally have everything put together.

9. How would you describe distributed leadership's influence on the subject that you teach?

I don't feel that it necessarily affects my subject so much, When we're doing things like observations or what not, sometimes those leaders have not been in that same content area so it could affect observations in that aspect, but other than that I don't see any change.

10. Please describe how you see distributed leadership influencing other subjects within your school.

Same situation.

11. Describe how you perceive the implementation of distributed leadership at your school.

I think that they rely on good people in order to distribute that leadership. Sometimes it does feel like it's who knows who, but at the same time you do....you would understand that person's personality more if you spend more time with them so it is understandable.

12. Please tell me about how you would implement distributed leadership differently in your school or if leadership may be missing something that could have been a beneficial influence(s) on the subject that you teach.

That's a good question. (laughter). Perhaps more observation on how teachers and other staff members interact throughout the day. Maybe, things like when you're doing bus duty or car duty or anything like that, you know watching how the teachers do that and then basing your distribution of leadership on that rather than relying so heavily on relationships.

13. Please describe how teacher leaders are chosen at your school.

I believe it's based on seniority and then reliability.

14. Please share your perceptions of how teacher leaders are identified within other subjects in your school.

It's the same.

15. Please describe the differences that you see in identifying teacher leaders within the subject you teach and other subjects within your school.

That's the same.

16. Please describe how distributed leadership has changed the academic capacity for the subject you teach at your school.

So, with the distribution it helps a lot with behavioral issues because sometimes we'll have multiple issues at one time and so having the reliable teachers that they do or staff members that they do be able to handle that as well, it's very helpful as far as being able to actually teach academically speaking.

17. Please share your perceptions of how distributed leadership has changed the overall academic capacity at your school.

So, I believe that helps in the same manner I just stated with the behavioral issues and things of that nature. It makes it easier overall for us to be able to focus on the lesson and things of that nature and then, um, like I said, this year they're implementing a lot more student encouragement for getting better grades, things like that. So hopefully, that...we haven't seen the progress yet because it's too early in the year, but hopefully that will help, you know, the students get engaged more, not just in our content area but overall.

18. Please describe how you see distributed leadership's influence(s) on the overall climate within your school.

I think it's a mixed feeling. Some people, I think, feel resentment maybe for the certain people that are being chosen, but at the same time, some of them also understand why these people are being chosen and so that's where we have I think the relationships vs. the character of people and all that getting muddled and mixed. But, it's a whole new administration so it's a lot of new things coming in and relying on old relationships in order to make sure things run smoothly. So it's...some people resent and some people are ok with it.

19. Please describe how leadership at your school searches for resources to benefit academic achievement within your school.

So, they do go to a lot of these conventions and meetings and what not. I feel like sometimes, particularly our principal, tries to do some independent research on how to at least bring in those extracurricular type goals and also to bring in professional development for teachers. I've seen a lot of that happen this year with a lot more professional development being offered in various ways and various times and days for the teachers too. So I think that helps.

20. How does leadership at your school search for resources to benefit academic achievement within the subject that you teach?

Same. Same way.

21. How does leadership search for resources to benefit academic achievement within other subjects at your school?

Same.

22. Please share with me anything else that you feel could be beneficial to the current study regarding distributed leadership, leadership within the subject you teach, and identifying leadership within that field of study.

So, I definitely think with, particularly in specific subject areas, things like growth scores would be important to look at. I know that the TVAAS formula is a little hectic at times, but I think for a teacher to be a leader they need to not only have their students succeeding academically, but socially and emotionally if there is a way that we could you know, observe that...things of that nature. I think that should definitely be pulled into consideration for leadership roles as teachers. Leadership, or distributed leadership at the school....I think we discussed that earlier, I think just needs to be how you monitor your

teachers or your staff members that you are looking to distribute that type of leadership to. Needs to be based more on...less personal relationships and maybe more overall how does this teacher react to these situations and things of that nature.

1. Please introduce yourself to me and describe your position at the school.

My name is Michelle and my position is sixth grade social studies teacher at William Faulkner Middle School.

2. Please describe your experiences as far as the leadership practices that you have encountered at this school and within the county.

As far as Faulkner Middle, leadership practices that we do here, we have two different committees. I think they listen to concerns that teachers have and try to make improvements and implement some strategies to accommodate what we see as weaknesses or areas of improvement. I think the execution sometimes is where we get a little off course. So, the ideas are great, but just the execution and how things are rolled out sometimes are not as clear and guided as it probably needs to be.

3. Please describe some of the workplace situations that have been catalysts for change in leadership practices.

I think...I mean this is my ninth year here at Faulkner Middle School, and so we have...I mean they've always asked for teacher input and I think at this school they've listened to the teacher input and tried to make changes. I think they do listen to teachers' opinions and ideas here, and again, it's just the execution, like for this past year we have a different schedule based on somebody from downtown that kind of put this schedule together and so we basically had to change our whole world in order to implement this new schedule and we've just found that there's some challenges for this new schedule that are not positive challenges and it's not what's best for kids or best for teachers. So, I think sometimes you have to try new things before you know if it works or don't work and then you have to tweak it. Another area that we had to improve was our lunchroom pickup. It's not a big, huge change, but it's just something that we didn't have to do before and it's one more thing.

4. Please describe how you perceive interactions between leaders and followers within your school.

I think the interactions are positive for the most part. We have our differences of course, but I think we try to be professional and discuss those issues that are not so clear cut and things that we can do better or things that maybe we have a better plan or better idea, but sometimes people get their feelings hurt when you don't follow what they have put into place. I think people here are very professional.

5. How about within other schools in the county?

I just know for social studies and that's all I can speak to, we work really closely, the social studies teachers throughout the county. We have a little mentoring group of teachers that will get together in the summer. So, we have people from Twain, and Fitzgerald, and Poe Middle, and Alcott Middle. So, we work really collectively together and I think that's really kind of what's made social studies a strong academic subject because we are more collaborative and we do try to work together. I don't know how that is for other subject areas. I know they try to do that. But, I do appreciate the collaborativeness of the other teachers for social studies in McCullough County.

6. Please describe how you see yourself as an educational leader.

I think I'm very focused and I think that I have high expectations for my students. I feel like sometimes, the students are just not held accountable for their learning and I really make them accountable and it's tough for some of the students because they have never been asked to do the things that I am asking them to do. So, I guess you'd call me strict, old school probably, but it's something that I feel passionate about and I teach social studies just because I feel like that's a subject that nobody cares about anymore.

7. Please describe how you fit into the leadership network of the county school system? Or is there is an opportunity for a leadership role outside of your classroom?

I'm part of the leadership team here at Faulkner Middle School. When I did the team leader, going into the different classrooms, I really liked that. It was all the work you had to do after you had to evaluate the lesson that was, and I think it's just me more so than the expectations, so just I spent a lot of time, hours, trying to make sure that I gave them good feedback and gave them some positive things that they could implement in their classroom....try to make their teaching strategies a little bit better, a little bit stronger. The compensation, I don't think really matched the amount of time that I was spending doing that. I just felt like here, we had a new administration team and there was really no support for a new team leader. So, that's why I didn't continue with the team leader position.

8. Please describe your experiences with distributed leadership while in this position.

I think I kind of spoke to that just a little bit previously, but for team leader, I just made sure that our department, I had 6th, 7th, and 8th grade teachers, I tried to keep everybody on track and focused. So, there's just certain things that I really feel like that we all need to be on the same page. We do have somethings that we can all do together like timelines is something that we can do consistently through all three grade levels. We can do primary sources and secondary sources would be something that we could all do and then the writing strategies, we call do that consistently through all the grades, but other than that the content doesn't really build on top of each other.

9. How would you describe distributed leadership's influence on the subject that you teach?

For me, I feel like I have a lot of leeway with the subject that I teach, but I'm a rule follower, so that may be different with another teacher. I pretty much adhere to the rules. We have a pacing guide for social studies for sixth grade. I have three other teachers that are my colleagues for sixth grade. We work closely together. I don't like it to be the Michelle show. I want it to be all of us collectively working together to make our content and our grade level the best it can be. I like to share the power. I don't mind leading, but I don't like it to just be me, you know, this is what you should do and this is what you should not do. I think we learn best from kind of sharing ideas and taking ideas from other people.

10. Please describe how you see distributed leadership influencing other subjects within your school.

I'm not really that much involved with the other subjects specifically just because we are kind of departmentalized a little bit, but just what I've heard from ELA, they seem to be a little more scattered. There's not that definite direction of teach this and then you have a test and teach that and then you have a test. It's more kind of open-ended and I think for ELA teachers sometimes it's a little bit overwhelming about what is it? How long do I need to spend on teaching those actual skills before you actually have a test? and do they come back around and you retest it? and things like that. I haven't heard much with science and I haven't really heard much with math.

11. Describe how you perceive the implementation of distributed leadership at your school.

Well for the lead teacher, I think they ask specific teachers to take those roles and for...I mean to be quite honest, I don't know how they choose the leadership team. I don't know if it's a score that we make on the TVAAS data or if it's just their preference. I'm not sure how we're actually chosen for those positions.

12. Please tell me about how you would implement distributed leadership differently in your school or if leadership may be missing something that could have been a beneficial influence(s) on the subject that you teach.

Well, I think some people are natural leaders and they want to lead and then I think some people are not natural leaders and so, have to be careful with that because when you put people in positions and they don't want to lead then you're not going to be successful. So, I think you need to know your teacher clientele a little bit better to see who actually can do that. But, sometimes you get the same people always doing the extras. I don't mean this in a bad way, but some of the younger teachers are just not putting in the time like the older seasoned teachers and I understand that too.

13. Please describe how teacher leaders are chosen at your school.

I think a lot of it just comes from the TVAAS score and I think when you do your teacher evaluations and then we have a pre-conference at the beginning of the year, it's called the beginning of the year conference and then we also have a post conference at the end of the year and you kind of discuss your strengths and weaknesses and goals and things that you would like to work on and then kind of talk about your scores and your professionalism rubric.

14. Please share your perceptions of how teacher leaders are identified within other subjects in your school.

At staff meetings, we have this new award that teachers pass out to each other when they've done an excellent job or an excellent...something they've done that goes over and beyond and I like that...just the teachers are recognized for doing things that maybe somebody else didn't even know that they did.

15. Please describe the differences that you see in identifying teacher leaders within the subject you teach and other subjects within your school.

Again, I just think it goes back to...I think people with experience seem to be more ready to lead or have that willingness to lead, but then sometimes you just need somebody to not hold your hand, but just kind of be there as a safety net just to make sure that things are going well. I just think people that have experience...seasoned teachers are the ones that sometimes want to be the leaders and people that are just getting started or been in teaching for a couple of years, they're still kind of getting their feet wet, not really wanting to have that position of leadership.

16. Please describe how distributed leadership has changed the academic capacity for the subject you teach at your school.

I really feel like that it's my goal to make sure that the teachers know what the expectations are for them as a teacher and what they have to pass on to their students. I'm kind of at that crossroads as I would like to give up that leadership position and let someone else do it, but I don't know who that someone would be because I don't see anybody taking that interest. I don't want to be the school that people make fun of because we don't do what we're supposed to do for social studies. I want to make sure that we're one that's like "Oh, they got it together at Faulkner Middle School."

17. Please share your perceptions of how distributed leadership has changed the overall academic capacity at your school.

I just think there's a lot of different variety of things that have to happen for this overall academic capacity at your school because every individual teacher teaches differently. We can have the same goal, but getting to that goal is a different way and a different place. When we compare 6th grade, 7th grade, and 8th grade scores, they're just very different. So, we have a lot of that up and down rollercoaster. They do really well in 6th grade and then something happens in 7th grade and then they come back up for 8th grade. So, there's a lot of reasons we could say that. Is that not very good academic instruction? I don't think so. I think it's just hormonal and the kids are interested in different things.

18. Please describe how you see distributed leadership's influence(s) on the overall climate within your school.

I think the climate is a positive one here at Faulkner Middle School. That hasn't always been the case. In the last few years, there were some teachers that were leaving the building due to the climate of the school. That has changed and we just saw an exodus of teachers that left the building and went to another place to teach or they retired. You just don't typically see that at Faulkner Middle School. Usually, teachers, they come, and they stay, and retire.

19. Please describe how leadership at your school searches for resources to benefit academic achievement within your school.

We have a great PTSA and they are very good at purchasing resources for us that we can use academically. I really feel like resources is not an issue here. If we really need it, we're able to get it.

20. How does leadership at your school search for resources to benefit academic achievement within the subject that you teach?

Just for McCullough County, for social studies department, we get a certain amount of money each year that we can spend on resources that we think would benefit academic achievement. We also have professional development that happens three and four times a year for the department of social studies. They're always very good. We have a social studies department page that has a ton of resources for teachers to use on that. So, I really feel like we are definitely supported for academic resources.

21. How does leadership search for resources to benefit academic achievement within other subjects at your school?

I'm not very well versed on the other subjects at our school. As a whole school, I think we all benefit from our academic resources, but specifically talking about each individual subject, I'm not sure because I'm not in those meetings or in that leadership.

22. Please share with me anything else that you feel could be beneficial to the current study regarding distributed leadership, leadership within the subject you teach, and identifying leadership within that field of study.

I just think that teaching overall has changed in the last 10 years. I think the students are coming in differently than they were 10 years ago. The expectations that are being placed on the students are definitely different and just the lack of the family unit staying intact...we're seeing some repercussions of that. As a whole, I think the community at Faulkner Middle School...the parents care about education which is super important. Of course, the teachers care about education. The economic impact also is changing a little bit and it has been over the years. Those are all things that we have to look at to meet the new challenges of students as they come into education.

1. Please introduce yourself to me and describe your position at the school.

My name is Levina and I teach science at William Faulkner Middle School.

2. Please describe your experiences as far as the leadership practices that you have encountered at this school and within the county.

I was at another school for 20 years. The leadership changed often but the reason why I'm here is because that leadership is going along with this new plan where they said that they can't have any punitive consequences for anything and it's in a lower socioeconomic area of McCullough County. Behavior has always been an issue and it got to the point where the kids had no fear of authority and I brought it to the attention of the principal. She said that efforts would be made to improve but for this school year that we're in right now there would be zero punitive consequences at that school. I voiced my concern that it wasn't benefitting the people that were having the behavior issues because it would teach them not to respect authority or society rules and then those may find themselves on the wrong end of the law because they wouldn't know any better. They weren't brought up with consequences, so therefore when they're a young adult they may think they don't have any consequences and that's when you hear about these shootings because they fail to comply. So, I voiced my concern about that and I voiced my concern about the other students in the classroom not having the opportunity to learn because of how some of the behaviors were in the classroom. A kid was walking back and forth and cursing telling the kids that they didn't have to do this shit....going up and down the rows and leaning in the kids faces saying why are you doing this? You don't have to do listen. You don't have to do anything. When an administrator was called to remove that student at the point where she was leaning in their faces and they looked scared, they didn't remove her from the room. They said she had the right to a free and public education. That's when I knew that had to be my last year there. So, I landed here. Here...I mean it's like day and night. The principals here, the administration here is very supportive. They conduct themselves like they're one of us like we're all one team. It's not like they are the bosses even though we all respect and know they are.

3. Please describe some of the workplace situations that have been catalysts for change in leadership practices.

This is only my second year here so I'm limited in what experiences I have here, but I do know that they're always trying to get different like, they're asking for people to be the lead teachers where they do the observations. They have other teachers (student walks in) they have other teachers that are calling for buses like for dismissal and things like that taking more of a leadership role and they encourage all of us to. But as far as I haven't taken anything, but they really encourage us to try to, you know, everybody kind of get involved in it so we are all like one team.

4. Please describe how you perceive interactions between leaders and followers within your school.

I think it's very, very positive. Everybody here that I've spoken to and myself included, I feel very respected and I feel supported at this school. I've never heard anyone say an unkind word or get mad or whatever...irritated with any...on either side really, the principals or the other teachers. You know, teachers will talk. It's all been positive.

5. How about within other schools in the county?

The other school I mentioned...there wasn't a whole lot of cooperation. So, I guess at the other school, it was very cliquish. But here, so far here, like I said it's only my second year here, but I mean people help one another. We really are like a family here.

6. Please describe how you see yourself as an educational leader.

I don't see myself in an educational leader role.

7. Please describe how you fit into the leadership network of the county school system? Or is there is an opportunity for a leadership role outside of your classroom?

Again, I kind of spoke to that, I don't take more of a leadership role now. I have been within my previous school, I was the team leader and things like that, but I've had to change and pull back from some of that. There are many opportunities for leadership outside of our classroom and they're constantly asking and reiterating over and over again like hey, here's some opportunities for leadership roles, whether they go send you to a training and you come back and share that, all different types of ways and in different amounts at this school, so yes, I do feel welcome to become part of that.

8. Please describe your experiences with distributed leadership while in this position.

I would have to say it's good. Like I said, we really form like one family, one team. Even when we're being evaluated or they're asking us to do something, for instance they asked us to give up part of lunch to go help in the cafeteria, pick up our kids, and help the cleanup, but all of us were happy to do it and willing to do it because of the consensus here, because it's a family atmosphere and that's what you do, family helps family.

9. How would you describe distributed leadership's influence on the subject that you teach?

We have professional learning communities and one of the principals will attend. They are there to moderate, but then also so they know what's going on in each department and grade level and we make the common assessments. So there is someone there from the leadership role and we're all sharing and then they will also pitch in ideas if we need it on how to improve test scores or things like that.

10. Please describe how you see distributed leadership influencing other subjects within your school.

I know that they do attend the other subjects' PLCs. Every month we have a faculty meeting, but I don't know specifics about other subjects other than I know they attend their PLCs.

11. Describe how you perceive the implementation of distributed leadership at your school.

I think it's great. I've been at my previous school, it was kind of like us against them like they were out to get ya. That's the feeling...the vibe in the school, and you always had to look over your shoulder even against other coworkers, but here I think it's great because like I said, you don't feel like, even if they pop in, whether it's a formal or informal evaluation, whether it's something that you....It's just like we feel that we can all pitch in and be part of the administration team in a sense, because we can take different parts and lead those different parts. There's room for advancement if you want it and nobody, even our bosses when we give them stuff, they're like, I'm not your boss, I'm just the facilitator of this school.

12. Please tell me about how you would implement distributed leadership differently in your school or if leadership may be missing something that could have been a beneficial influence(s) on the subject that you teach.

I mean really, I have nothing. Nothing that I would change or do differently.

13. Please describe how teacher leaders are chosen at your school.

I know they have a leadership committee and I'm new to the school so I know.....(teacher leader came in)....but even like that, like that's one of the people with a leadership role but they're just like one of us. I know I've said that before, but so, and a lot of times the leadership committee must be chosen maybe by seniority, but they often ask, they'll put out an all staff email about anybody that, even if you're not on the leadership committee, asking for our input that your chosen grade level person or subject person could bring to that table. So, even if we're not on there, a lot of times they'll ask for volunteers. I know they also base it on maybe evaluation and TVAAS scores, but they still invite us to send our questions or comments or grievances and they present them at the meetings.

14. Please share your perceptions of how teacher leaders are identified within other subjects in your school.

Again, the only way that I would know about identifying, they do have a grade level person that we know is kind of in charge and I would assume that's just from seniority in the building, but as far as they're identified they'll usually say, there's a department level, there's a sixth grade one that leads the science PLCs and those are introduced at the beginning of the year so they're identified and that's our go to person if we need something.

15. Please describe the differences that you see in identifying teacher leaders within the subject you teach and other subjects within your school.

So, I don't know that there are differences between the different subjects. I think it's pretty much the same.

16. Please describe how distributed leadership has changed the academic capacity for the subject you teach at your school.

When I started here last year, they gave me like three different people's names that if I had issues with technology to incorporate into science or if I needed help with any of the...the science curriculum was brand new. They gave me people that are here at the school level that were good resources for me and I just could go and pick their brain.

17. Please share your perceptions of how distributed leadership has changed the overall academic capacity at your school.

I would have to say, I mean my perception is that it's improved it. I have nothing to back that up except that I know that happy teachers when they feel supported and respected and they have those resources, even within the building, that welcome them to come or check in and say hey, you need anything, that you're more apt to use those and so I would assume it's positive.

18. Please describe how you see distributed leadership's influence(s) on the overall climate within your school.

Our climate is very positive and upbeat. I mean, there's nothing else I can say.

19. Please describe how leadership at your school searches for resources to benefit academic achievement within your school.

Now, that I really don't know an answer to. I don't know how they find the resources other than internet. I mean, I have no idea.

20. How does leadership at your school search for resources to benefit academic achievement within the subject that you teach?

Again, I'm sorry. I have no knowledge of that.

21. How does leadership search for resources to benefit academic achievement within other subjects at your school?

No idea. I know that's horrible

22. Please share with me anything else that you feel could be beneficial to the current study regarding distributed leadership, leadership within the subject you teach, and identifying leadership within that field of study.

I hate to sound so Pollyanna, but everything here is great. I've never had so many more resources at my fingertips or people willing to help. I know, rose-colored glasses, but it's been day and night from where I came from.

1. Please introduce yourself to me and describe your position at the school.

I'm Layla and I teach 7th grade ELA at Zora Neale Hurston Middle School.

2. Please describe your experiences as far as the leadership practices that you have encountered at this school and within the county.

Leadership roles tend to be...of course there are fewer leaders, but they try to promote leadership within teams like as having team leaders and things. I like that. I like that we're able to contribute and there are sometimes opportunities to be on the leadership team where you do evaluations and things like that and they usually pull those from people here within the school, but there's not as many of those. I don't have any negative experiences.

3. Please describe some of the workplace situations that have been catalysts for change in leadership practices.

So, some of the practices that are changing is just like when we meet in our learning communities, we are getting ready for that. Behavior definitely has driven some of the choices and the things that we have come up with. We had a whole new shift of students come in. They didn't want to be here. And so, last year we spent about 50% of the time dealing with behaviors and, you know, cut about 50% of our teaching out so that changed a lot of...the, some of the things we did and how the leadership approaches our strategies and everything...so.

4. Please describe how you perceive interactions between leaders and followers within your school.

Our leaders are very supportive. They're not.....they're definitely servant leaders. They're not bosses you know. Our 7th grade principal...he's new this year to us and he has been wonderful. he's constantly helping us. Like, he stepped in one day, I was having a horrible day and it was just....I was interrupted about 50 times, I couldn't think, I'd made mistakes. Like he came in and ran copies for me cause they were run sideways and he fixed it, And so, they're very hands on and very supportive.

5. How about within other schools in the county?

I haven't personally had experience, but I keep hearing that Zora Neale is a special place. That people...you know, their leadership's not necessarily as supportive and sometimes they side with the kids over the teachers and what not. And I don't know that, like I said. That's not my experience. But, I mean....I think, it's definitely not the administration it's just siding with teachers against students either. It's definitely not that with.....they're there for both parties, but personal experience I don't know. I've heard other people say it's just not the same. The people don't work together like we do. We work as a team, so...

6. Please describe how you see yourself as an educational leader.

I am the type of person that if I have a job I go...I do more than what they ask usually. I'm always looking for the next thing. I would like to be a lead teacher one day, you know, if that opportunity came. But when we lost a lot of our students, we lost some of those positions. We didn't have as many that we could have, but I made tenure. So, I was able to make tenure so, I'm focused and little stubbornly determined to always be better. So, I want to be the best teacher I can for the kids. I don't know. I'm reliable.

7. Please describe how you fit into the leadership network of the county school system? Or is there is an opportunity for a leadership role outside of your classroom?

I don't know...just from where I'm at right now if there would be a leadership role that...what I could do is when we have our learning days or professional development days I could teach one of the classes if I wanted to do that, you know I could offer something. But, as far as outside of here, just carrying a leadership role, I don't know. I could be a literacy coach or something and that could be something I could do county-wide, but right now I need to teach more PDs really before I could even qualify for that so....

8. Please describe your experiences with distributed leadership while in this position.

I definitely think we have a lot of, like I said, we've got team leaders so we've got our administration and then all of the clubs and things....somebody's involved with something. So, everybody is given responsibility. So, it's definitely....everything that we do, everything that is promoted....everybody has a role in it so I think leadership is distributed all the way down.

9. How would you describe distributed leadership's influence on the subject that you teach?

I don't know that it directly affects what I'm doing because my leadership is....I don't know. I mean.....my leadership role does help me be more aware.

10. Please describe how you see distributed leadership influencing other subjects within your school.

I think it's just the same. Of course, I mean, we have department chairs and things that...and I'm not that, but that type of leadership takes that small group of subject areas and when we work we try to work like 6th, 7th, and 8th together you know to have that idea of what were going to do, what our goals are. It affects what we're doing in class. Everybody has different roles, different responsibilities, but those small groups that are meeting...it helps keep us on track....make sure, you know, we're not all discombobulated, we're working as fluidly between 6th grade to 8th grade.

11. Describe how you perceive the implementation of distributed leadership at your school.

How I perceive....typically leaders are chosen because of their proven abilities not just, you know, randomly because of somebody's buddy or whatever. I think....I don't know. People are chosen based off of what they've done. If you want a role, they want you to be a leader.

12. Please tell me about how you would implement distributed leadership differently in your school or if leadership may be missing something that could have been a beneficial influence(s) on the subject that you teach.

I'm not sure. The only one thing that I can think that was I guess a negative is when they did pull a lead teacher for this year, they pulled one person, There was myself and a few others that was interested, but we didn't know about it till after the position was filled. They already did it beforehand and that's not typical but it happened and so I think I would just actually let everybody apply before, even if you know who you're going to choose, you know. But, the person that they chose was somebody that's not in the classroom all the time. They have a little bit more freedom...any way. So, I think I would just do that. Just make sure everybody had that same opportunity.

13. Please describe how teacher leaders are chosen at your school.

They're selected by the admin. That's where it starts. Sometimes, we have people that are on the leadership team in every grade and sometimes they recommend. They have leadership meetings where they talk about, you know, who would be good to bring on the leadership team or, you know, who would be good for this. They do discuss it, but it is ultimately up to the admin.

14. Please share your perceptions of how teacher leaders are identified within other subjects in your school.

Part of it is they look at scores. They look at not only what you're making on evaluations, but what kids scored like on TCAP, you know, if you're successful or not. Of course, I mean, if you're here, if you're dependable, and they look at little things like when we have bus duty for instance. Are you somebody that blows it off? Are you somebody that's there? So, they kind of look at the whole package, but the data of your scores and how you teach and your evaluations definitely play a big role.

15. Please describe the differences that you see in identifying teacher leaders within the subject you teach and other subjects within your school.

I don't know that there are any differences there. It would still go back to the scores. It would go back to the person, how they teach, if they're reliable. I mean, I don't see like a major difference. The only thing I would say is it's easier for them to pull leaders that are teaching related arts than to pull like subject area. I think that that is an easier thing.

16. Please describe how distributed leadership has changed the academic capacity for the subject you teach at your school.

I think it's just given us a voice, but you know we're able....like in the ELA department or in any department if we see something that is not working, we can go to our admin. Our admin then can go to the ELA person that's over the county or we can go to them. Our ELA department chair can go to them because she works closely with them so I think it's just...it give us a voice. We don't have a whole lot of choices, but, you know, a little bit.

17. Please share your perceptions of how distributed leadership has changed the overall academic capacity at your school.

I think it's all made us accountable and aware of what we have to do to be able to help move the kids. It makes everybody responsible. We're not just waiting for the admin to tell us what to do.

18. Please describe how you see distributed leadership's influence(s) on the overall climate within your school.

That climate that we had last year was rough. The climate this year is so much better. The kids are kind of ingrained in our expectations now...the ones that are in 8th grade. The ones in 6th grade weren't...they were just coming into middle school to start with so this group that we have now is not the ones that really had that issue. It's the ones that are in 8th grade now that came in and they are so much more calm is what the 8th grade teachers say and I think it just has a lot to do with how we have kind of tried to meet their needs, tried to change, make those incentives, trying to make them accountable for their work, and reward them when they are. So, I think all that has helped and we all have to be onboard for that.

19. Please describe how leadership at your school searches for resources to benefit academic achievement within your school.

Well, they're constantly sending out resources to us that they have found....different research, whatever. They present it to us when we have our learning communities. Our principal is very much into research and data so he is constantly passing things to us. So, I don't know honestly.....probably not a very good answer for that one, but it's about all I can think of on that one so, but everything they do is to help us like "research shows this". You know, we see that and hear that all the time. So they do present those things to us. Not like you're just going to do this because we said, but this is why, so...

20. How does leadership at your school search for resources to benefit academic achievement within the subject that you teach?

Well, same thing, it kind of goes down to our ELA teacher, urrr, I mean ELA department chair will come up with things she's gotten from the state. She will give us like the latest, what's going to be on the test, what to expect, what...here's new practices, here's new this, we're constantly....we've already changed some of the things we're going to bring in to read already. I mean that was a change that was immediate that we've just done. So, anyway, little worried about it, but it's...they're struggling with what they've got....giving them something they already don't understand is a little worrisome, but yeah. (laughter)

21. How does leadership search for resources to benefit academic achievement within other subjects at your school?

I would say that they would do the same type of things. We have the county in service that we'll go to and they usually bring in some sort of speaker, but then we have these small, personalized groups that you know...classes we can go to. Usually, somebody...they'll divide up and then we bring back what we learn to the school and then they share and then what would benefit them we talk about then make those plans to use those things. So, I think pretty much every subject area...I know for 7th grade for sure that's how we do it is, you know, kind of divide and conquer, get as much information as we can, see what's going to work, try it.

22. Please share with me anything else that you feel could be beneficial to the current study regarding distributed leadership, leadership within the subject you teach, and identifying leadership within that field of study.

I just think that the biggest, the most important thing with distributed leadership is that everybody has some sort of important role. Everybody is needed. If a teacher whose struggling is not...has something maybe extra that they're accountable for they might feel isolated. They might feel like they're not a part of the program. It might even fall away. But if they've got something like where everybody has to be on a committee. Whether you wanted to be on a committee or not everybody is on a committee. But then those people that didn't really want to be there to start with they start contributing, they start feeling a part of it and so it makes everybody kind of have a buy in and it becomes, you know, this is our school, this is more than work, this is, you know, something we're all part of not just this is that one teacher we don't know, we never see them, they never show up. I think distributed leadership is important just to build that team.

1. Please introduce yourself to me and describe your position at the school.

My name is Susie and I am an 8th grade social studies teacher at Ernest Hemingway Middle School.

2. Please describe your experiences as far as the leadership practices that you have encountered at this school and within the county.

Ok. So, I would say we do function as a team. It's not dictatorial. I would not say that. And there is a structure by which, like within the social studies, we have a team leader for our grade social studies and there is an overall social studies leader that I have a lot less contact with because she is in a different grade. So we have kind of a teacher team leaders, and then we have our assistant principal, and then our principal above that.

3. Please describe some of the workplace situations that have been catalysts for change in leadership practices.

Hmmm.....change within the way we do things? Ok, and just to clarify this is my first year here. I think that we're pretty good at adapting to fill in gaps if there are any. As far as a backup with student support, especially students that have higher needs in the area of behaviors. We do a good job within our group with like our lead teachers of asking advice and how as a team we can work to fulfill any sort of gaps or anything falling through the cracks that's making our day difficult as well as our administrative team stepping in to offer additional supports and maybe escalate the situation to make everyone else's day better so, yeah that's what I would see as how change has maybe gone around.

4. Please describe how you perceive interactions between leaders and followers within your school.

I would say...interactions... there is probably a range. I have heard talk and been aware that this school had a more negative morale prior years, but this year I don't detect that. Like, I can sense sort of inklings here and there, like carryover, but I don't feel that we have that environment now.

5. How about within other schools in the county?

I do not have any knowledge about that.

6. Please describe how you see yourself as an educational leader.

I see myself as someone who is genuinely concerned about education being a positive force on young people and society as a whole. I see myself as someone who treats people the way I want to be treated and teaches and disciplines the way I did with my own children who are young adults now. I like to always learn and adapt when things need to improve like I don't consider myself stuck in my ways and wanting to just do the way I've done it because I know that. Like, I'm not afraid to try something different if what I'm doing isn't getting any results.

7. Please describe how you fit into the leadership network of the county school system? Or is there is an opportunity for a leadership role outside of your classroom?

I feel like I fit into that. I feel like I have been asked especially in regard to curriculum type things because I come from the high school level and knowing where 8th graders are going subsequent to this year. I feel like they have appreciated input here and there. I think in future years there might be opportunities for a leadership role, but I think being that this is my first year probably not at present.

8. Please describe your experiences with distributed leadership while in this position.

Ok. My experiences....I feel supported. I have felt at times that they are very busy people and my concern or immediate need might have not been immediately accessible, you know, they might not have been immediately accessible and not because they were anywhere they shouldn't have been or anything like that or because it didn't matter. I got the sense there was a lot going on for them at times.

9. How would you describe distributed leadership's influence on the subject that you teach?

I think that it's got a good influence because we have updated standards this year. Our principal was formerly in the subject area that I teach, so I feel a little bit more of an awareness and connection with, you know, he gets the subject that we're involved with. They're genuinely concerned like our schoolwide goal is raise achievement levels for all of our students.

10. Please describe how you see distributed leadership influencing other subjects within your school.

Yeah, I do notice a real genuine concern that all our achievement in all areas is improved and that it's important for the whole student, you know, to develop the whole student and really instill the proper skills they're going to need going forward.

11. Describe how you perceive the implementation of distributed leadership at your school.

Overall, positive. Our principal is in his first year. I really like him. I think he does a good job, but I think a team that is coming together new with a new leader, there's always going to be gaps or uncertainty or just learning opportunities there.

12. Please tell me about how you would implement distributed leadership differently in your school or if leadership may be missing something that could have been a beneficial influence(s) on the subject that you teach.

Well, I will say we, you asked me earlier about distributed leadership and I left out a part. There is some sort of mysterious council of teachers. Teachers know personnel and we nominated someone who couldn't already be a leader in some other way but they also couldn't have been in their first year so we chose a guy who actually doesn't work here anymore. I didn't choose him, but other people chose him. But, I don't know the purpose of that group. Like, if a delegate was sort of selected to be on this committee that's supposed to be a bit different than the other things going on, we haven't been asked for any input or reported that anything had been decided or discussed or any of that. So that's a little vague.

13. Please describe how teacher leaders are chosen at your school.

Well, that was how that went with that council thing. It's like hey we want somebody to represent 8th grade on the council, some kind of council, and we don't want them to already be in a leadership role and so the guy was saying that nominated himself said "Hey yeah I'm thinking I want to get back into administration so I want to do this" and the way that hit me was "this supposed to be a person representing the input of the team" and I think that was the opposite of input from a team, but like I said he doesn't work here anymore. He went to an admin job...already. So he's not....actually the person that I wanted in the first place is it now so.

14. Please share your perceptions of how teacher leaders are identified within other subjects in your school.

That's a good question because like within our subject area and I know this within other subjects it just appears to be the person whose been there maybe the longest is how it comes across to me.

15. Redacted

16. Please describe how distributed leadership has changed the academic capacity for the subject you teach at your school.

I really feel like our leadership practices have an impact on our ability to improve these students academically. There was a ways to go. There was I believe, prior to this year, some pretty low expectations so it's a big job to do and I really feel like there's an honest effort towards that.

17. Please share your perceptions of how distributed leadership has changed the overall academic capacity at your school.

Ok, I think same thing. I think like I know for sure because I've heard comments like this person was in this grade last year as far as admins and this admin was in another grade last year like they really moved around the administrators to try and get strong leadership teams as a reaction to prior years. So, I feel like it has improved the ability to raise our students up to where we want them.

18. Please describe how you see distributed leadership's influence(s) on the overall climate within your school.

I see them as overall...supportive and like I said, with the united mission towards making it a better school and improving our academic results, however at times, it doesn't always feel like they're accessible and that could be all that they're doing you know. There is a lot going on.

19. Please describe how leadership at your school searches for resources to benefit academic achievement within your school.

Well, we have acquired some materials that, at the county level, that were chosen by a committee with the assumption this would be the best route to teaching the students and then internally we get asked all the time "what can we get" you know. We have this much money, what do you all want to buy? What would help you and all that type of stuff. So, I think that they offer us the opportunities as far as searching out resources. One of our administrative assistant principal people was also in social studies so when he runs across something, he definitely shares it.

20. How does leadership at your school search for resources to benefit academic achievement within the subject that you teach?

Same answer as last number.

21. How does leadership search for resources to benefit academic achievement within other subjects at your school?

I think probably equally. I mean I haven't noticed that had been any difference in subjects at this school.

22. Please share with me anything else that you feel could be beneficial to the current study regarding distributed leadership, leadership within the subject you teach, and identifying leadership within that field of study.

Hmm...that's a hard question. You have a hard topic area that you are working on here. I don't know. It's such an odd thing the way educators and educational leaders...I don't know how they're evaluated, but I know as teachers have a rubric I think. I think they have the same thing. They're just so many points on there and so much to do and got to get in contact with the parent then, you know, this is blowing up over here, and they just...I don't know how they do it. I would not want to be in leadership if I can say that. Yeah, I mean...I think that sometimes and not necessarily within my school, but within decision makers higher up haven't spent enough time in the classroom, but if they're at the decision making level or policy making level things get decided that are difficult on practically speaking....but you may have already known that. I can't think of anything to add to that.

1. Please introduce yourself to me and describe your position at the school.

My name is Kelli. I'm a 7th grade social studies teacher at Carson McCullers Middle School.

2. Please describe your experiences as far as the leadership practices that you have encountered at this school and within the county.

Well, my only real experiences with leadership in our county is with my day to day dealings with our assistant principals. They monitor the hallways. They check on us in our classrooms. From time to time we have to text them or call them or visit them to talk about Student A or B or talk about a situation we know of. They're very receptive to us talking to them. They listen. They act upon things that need to be acted upon. They are very proactive instead of reactive. I don't have a lot of experience with leadership in the county other than getting hired and starting employment here.

3. Please describe some of the workplace situations that have been catalysts for change in leadership practices.

Ok, this particular school year we have gained 40 to 50 students over last school year and so we tried doing early mornings a little differently like the students come in got their food and they went to these large classrooms where they could put lots of students. They could eat until 8 o'clock until...when they go to their clubs in the morning. With this new number of students, this influx of school population, we were not able to complete that. So, we had to sit down and talk about what we can do differently. We went back to what we were doing last year where every day 1 to 2 teachers of each grade are available to help supervise these children in their classroom while we are waiting for the school day to begin. So, they were very proactive in making changes as necessary to make things better at our school. As our school population changes here, the socioeconomic part continues to drop. We try to do as many community involvement activities as well. We have a parent night and a family night. You know...fun things for the kids to come and do at the school so the school is not such an imposing thing to some of these families that feel like 'well, I'm poor I don't need to show up there. I don't need to be involved in this or that.' So, I think our school has been very receptive to these changes and we have changed how we do things because of this.

4. Please describe how you perceive interactions between leaders and followers within your school.

I perceive our interactions to be very positive. They don't criticize. They might offer suggestions for doing things better the next time or they'll encourage you to continue doing the things the way you are doing them because things are working. So, I always feel like it's very positive when I interact with our leadership.

5. How about within other schools in the county?

Well, I've only been in this school district...this is my 2nd full-time year so I'll be honest. I'm not as aware of what goes on in this county because it's a very large county. There's quite a few schools in this county so I don't know a lot about other schools in our county.

6. Please describe how you see yourself as an educational leader.

To be honest, I feel like I'm being held back in this county. Here, I am strictly a teacher. I am not involved in any of the leadership decision making...any of those things even though they know I'm capable and available. It's just not been tapped into so I do feel very disappointed that's not being tapped into. I have a lot to offer.

7. Please describe how you fit into the leadership network of the county school system? Or is there is an opportunity for a leadership role outside of your classroom?

I don't feel like I fit into that network and I don't feel like there's many opportunities. I think it's a very political system here honestly and I feel like I'm on the outside looking in and that's something that I've had to accept so far. I'm not a person to grovel and beg for a position so I'll work and hope and pray my hard work shows through and that it'll get recognized and if it don't then God has the plan.

8. Please describe your experiences with distributed leadership while in this position.

There's been a few situations where I've had to talk to them about Student A, you know, little Johnny or little Bobby or, you know, they'll listen to what I have to say, they will make suggestions, they will help me with contacting parents and helping resolve these situations. They're very proactive here. So I've had good experiences sitting down saying "Hey. We've got this problem. We need to work on it" or "the school has this situation. Can we work on it?" So I've had very positive interactions on this side of the coin as far as things going on and different experiences that needed taken of.

9. How would you describe distributed leadership's influence on the subject that you teach?

Well, our county social studies leaders are very, very proactive. Every time we have a PD day, Professional Development day, we meet at a particular school, we go over things. They have little workshops that different teachers will do and lead about how we can do this, how we can do that, how it could enhance our classroom teaching. So, I think that our county does a good job at this and they do greatly influence how we teach and what we teach because they're trying to help us provide as many opportunities for as many different children as possible with all their different learning styles and different backgrounds and different abilities. So, I do feel like our county, the leadership at the county level helps influence my subject very much.

10. Please describe how you see distributed leadership influencing other subjects within your school.

Well I see...we have a special needs classroom down the hall and I see administration involved with that teacher all the time making sure those kids have what they need. I see a lot of work being done with our ELL population. We have a great, large population and I've seen lots of changes in the students just this year alone and we actually had a training a few days ago with a new program for reading that will help translate into numerous languages so they're trying to make strides in helping those students. I see leadership at work.

11. Describe how you perceive the implementation of distributed leadership at your school.

I see the distributed leadership....I think there needs to be another male influence in the building. We only have one male administrator. I think that a lot of these students have no male figure in their lives. So, I think that is something that might be missing. Nothing against the other ladies. The female administrators that work here are very good administrators and do a great job, but I think some of the students do need more fatherly figures in their lives and that's what....there needs to be at least one more male administrator to help with that distribution.

12. Please tell me about how you would implement distributed leadership differently in your school or if leadership may be missing something that could have been a beneficial influence(s) on the subject that you teach.

Other than having another male, I do think that the way that our administration team is set up is very positive. I think having a curriculum administrator that works just with curriculum and with every teacher in every grade level in every subject is very positive. So, I don't know that I would do anything much differently other than have another male figure or two in leadership positions.

13. Please describe how teacher leaders are chosen at your school.

Honestly, I don't know. I'm just going to be blunt. I don't know. I really don't. I don't know the criteria. I don't know what they do because I've not been involved.

14. Please share your perceptions of how teacher leaders are identified within other subjects in your school.

Well, we do have a team leader in each grade and I don't know how that's determined and I know that we have a social studies leader in our school and I don't know how that one is chosen either. But, I do know that these people talk to us on a regular basis, ask us if we have needs, if we have suggestions or what...suggestions we can give them. I do know we do what we call co-planning very often with our grade level...our other grade level subject teacher. He's also the social studies leader so I have a lot interaction with him. So, I think that they...those people are identified very well and they do a good job of helping lead us.

15. Please describe the differences that you see in identifying teacher leaders within the subject you teach and other subjects within your school.

I think they're identified the same. I think that they're...we're told who these leaders are. They lead us in different PD at different days and different times. So I don't think there are any differences.

16. Please describe how distributed leadership has changed the academic capacity for the subject you teach at your school.

I think with the leadership setting it the way that it is that we are able to get things we need and we're able to be heard whenever we say "Hey, we have a need. Can you help us with this?" So, I do think our distributed leadership pattern has helped us be able to do a better job teaching our grade level and our subject.

17. Please share your perceptions of how distributed leadership has changed the overall academic capacity at your school.

Well, I think with the PD that our leadership does lead it has helped us all grow as teachers which in turn helps our students grow as students and learners.

18. Please describe how you see distributed leadership's influence(s) on the overall climate within your school.

I think our leadership's influence helps keep the climate very positive, very uplifting. They do things when they can. They do positive things for us.

19. Please describe how leadership at your school searches for resources to benefit academic achievement within your school.

Well, they brainstorm with each other. They brainstorm with us. They also read different educational articles. They're always up on that. They of course talk to teachers at other schools and see what they're doing and how they're doing things. So, they are very proactive in those areas to make sure that we have the best of the best and can do what we need to do to the best of our abilities.

20. How does leadership at your school search for resources to benefit academic achievement within the subject that you teach?

I think the answer for that is the same as 19. They're always proactive in researching and looking and trying to find anything and everything they can to make our jobs easier and better for our kids.

21. How does leadership search for resources to benefit academic achievement within other subjects at your school?

Well again, I know I sound redundant, but again, they do classes, they go to workshops, they bring workshops to us. They bring us guest speakers to help motivate us or to help us learn different ways to do things. I've had some different workbooks and books bought for me to help me do a better job, not just as a teacher, but to help me provide different resources and things to my kids and not just for me, but for all the teachers here. So, I think that our leadership's search for resources is very fruitful, not just my subject, but for all the subjects.

22. Please share with me anything else that you feel could be beneficial to the current study regarding distributed leadership, leadership within the subject you teach, and identifying leadership within that field of study.

I think more honesty needs to be put out there on how they choose leaders and what they are looking for so that people that are interested in that know what they're up against and know what they face in making this happen because I for one am very interested in making that progression in my career in education and I don't know how to do it here.

1. Please introduce yourself to me and describe your position at the school.

My name is Chrissey. I teach 6th grade science at James Fenimore Cooper Middle School.

2. Please describe your experiences as far as the leadership practices that you have encountered at this school and within the county.

Ok, so this is my second year here at James Fenimore Cooper Middle School. Our administrative team does have a leadership group, leadership team. There are other teams, other committees, that are working on student and teacher recognition, other committees that are working on communication, community outreach.

3. Please describe some of the workplace situations that have been catalysts for change in leadership practices.

We have at this school, a very...leadership gets very involved in a lot of minor things so the things that are catalysts for change in our school are things that this teacher perceives to be unimportant.

4. Please describe how you perceive interactions between leaders and followers within your school.

I think the interactions are generally positive, but we have a very authoritarian leader and I think that sometimes, again everything is very positive, but I'm not sure everybody really wears the face that maybe they're feeling. And so, again, it's positive, but it...it's often just basic demands.

5. How about within other schools in the county?

Ok, so I worked at Edgar Allan Poe Middle School before I came here. I worked for two different principals. One principal was extremely interested in engaging all the teachers in the decision-making processes. We were given a lot of opportunities. I wasn't on any leadership committee in that school. I was a lead teacher at that school, but I was not...and that was part of the leadership team. The first principal was extremely open to getting your suggestions...really didn't want to, you know, look at trivial matters...was more interested in big picture issues and I felt really supported. I felt very open to bringing my ideas to the table. Now, she could say that's a stinky idea and I would be fine with it because I'd think that would be a stinky idea, you know, she was very approachable. She was very involved and she in my opinion was a very strong and a very good leader and really got the job done. A lot of times I didn't like her decisions, but that's ok because I don't see the picture the way she does and I trusted that whatever her

lead was I was right there behind her and if I felt a different way it was ok, I was wrong. I actually did. The second principal was getting new to the job....very do whatever you want to do, took things that in my opinion were very serious kind of well whatever kind of thing, but I really could say very little about him because I only worked with him for a short time. There was not a leadership team at that school. It was just the leadership team was the administrators, the lead teachers, and so forth so that was different. I worked before that at Zora Neale under two different principals. She made it very clear she didn't care what you thought, but the school ran beautifully and I can work with somebody like that who basically says hey, you know, this is what we're gonna do. She attacked the big issues and she let the rest of it, you know, I'm not going to get in your room and figure out if you need blue pencils or green pencils I don't care. The second principal that I worked for was a Cracker Jack. He was on a mission and he basically said if you're not on the mission with me you can leave. I'll write you a reference. He was very forward-seeing. He would get involved in the minutia. He used to walk into my classroom and write me...he would sit in the class for 15 or 20 minutes and write me feedback...give me feedback about my teaching. You could sit and talk to him. I think his leadership style was great. I work very well under somebody that's super organized and has vision and um, there was no leadership team or committee at that school either when I worked there.

6. Please describe how you see yourself as an educational leader.

So, I see myself as an education leader in my classroom. I need to model behaviors for students. I need to model thinking for students. I need for them to see me as an educational leader and hope that they'll be educational leaders in their lives too, um, that they'll grow into educational leaders which is what I always tell them.

7. Please describe how you fit into the leadership network of the county school system? Or is there is an opportunity for a leadership role outside of your classroom?

I don't desire at this point in my career to be working in the, you know, to be a part of the school system. I do what I'm asked by the school system. I don't....I'm sure there's an opportunity if I wanted one. I don't know what that would be. The only thing that I could think of would be something like moving into a supervisory role or something like that at the county. I really don't see myself in that. I see myself more as the local person in the school who fulfills that role.

8. Please describe your experiences with distributed leadership while in this position.

Well, and I think I described that earlier when I talked about the leadership committee and the fact that we have certain responsibilities.

9. How would you describe distributed leadership's influence on the subject that you teach?

I don't think there's any influence on the subject I teach, We do have a chairperson who is trying to bring 6th, 7th, and 8th grade together. We're all still very separate. And these are all wonderful people. I'm not being negative about it.

10. Please describe how you see distributed leadership influencing other subjects within your school.

I'm going to have a very hard time being able to answer that question. I...I do believe that pretty much everybody, all the other content areas, I can't really speak for related arts, but the content areas, I think it is the same kind of situation where the chairs get their information from a supervisor and then the principal gives the chairs information and then we're told this is what we're going to do. So, I don't think it is any different in social studies or math or ELA than it is in science.

11. Describe how you perceive the implementation of distributed leadership at your school.

I don't really think that there is distributed leadership at our school, if you would call leadership committee distributed leadership and chair, um...it would be hard for me to comment on the implementation because I'm not seeing that...

12. Please tell me about how you would implement distributed leadership differently in your school or if leadership may be missing something that could have been a beneficial influence(s) on the subject that you teach.

And here's my...and I'm back to what we talked about right at the beginning. If I was the principal, I would implement distributed leadership by looking at what's the biggest problem we've got in this school.

13. Please describe how teacher leaders are chosen at your school.

The chair positions are appointed by the principal. As far as lead teachers, the process is watching a video and doing...filling out some information and then based on what information people gave back the principal appointed the lead teacher.

14. Please share your perceptions of how teacher leaders are identified within other subjects in your school.

Well, again, I don't know what she did with the chair. I don't know how she handled that and as far as lead teachers it didn't matter what subject you taught....didn't matter whether you taught ELA or science or art, it was the same process that they had to go through.

15. Please describe the differences that you see in identifying teacher leaders within the subject you teach and other subjects within your school.

I guess I'm not clear on what I am to comment on. Is it perceived? I'm not sure. The differences in identifying teacher leaders...there really isn't any difference between the answers that I gave in terms of 13 and 14. It's all the same pretty much.

16. Please describe how distributed leadership has changed the academic capacity for the subject you teach at your school.

I don't know. Again, I don't know that we really have distributed leadership, but I don't think there has been any change in the academic capacity because we're not doing anything to make those changes. I would love to see that.

17. Please share your perceptions of how distributed leadership has changed the overall academic capacity at your school.

I don't think there's been any change. I mean, again...distributed leadership. There was a leadership team, there were lead teachers before, there were chairs before, but there's nothing being implemented. You know, if you continue to put resources in a certain way and it's not working...if you continue to put resources in that same way again it's still going to continue to not work.

18. Please describe how you see distributed leadership's influence(s) on the overall climate within your school.

Well, I think the perception is that, you know, the leadership team and all that, that, that makes having normal people like me, you know, a classroom teacher and that makes it more accessible to people. They feel like they can talk with us and whatever, but I don't think it's changed the climate. There's still, we still have some difficulties in climate with teachers, between teachers, and grade levels between grade levels, and subjects, and all that silly nonsense that certainly doesn't need to be there.

19. Please describe how leadership at your school searches for resources to benefit academic achievement within your school.

I really have a hard time answering that question. Um, I would love...I want the school...I want to be able to say I well, I disagree with how they do it. At least they do it.

20. How does leadership at your school search for resources to benefit academic achievement within the subject that you teach?

Same.

21. How does leadership search for resources to benefit academic achievement within other subjects at your school?

It's really the same. I can't really add anything to it. I'm sorry.

22. Please share with me anything else that you feel could be beneficial to the current study regarding distributed leadership, leadership within the subject you teach, and identifying leadership within that field of study.

Well, I guess I just have to go back and comment. I think the classroom teachers are the key to fixing the problem, but we don't have resources given to us and tools that would be beneficial for our kids and that's really what I would love to say and I think I've said it a million times already.

1. Please introduce yourself to me and describe your position at the school.

My name is Ted and I teach 6th grade math at William Faulkner Middle School.

2. Please describe your experiences as far as the leadership practices that you have encountered at this school and within the county.

I feel like we have strong leadership here. This is my 9th year teaching. . . I believe that that strong leadership, that positivity that is exuded from the top trickles down and has a lasting effect on the teachers which of course has a big impact on our students and so that's been one of the biggest things about this school that I feel like we have that support to go to when we need it and that affects how our students are supported.

3. Please describe some of the workplace situations that have been catalysts for change in leadership practices.

Our principal, our head principal, was new. So, I think that there was a lot of change, you know, minor shifts here and there in the way things are run from last year to this year and I think that a lot of it was her coming in and looking at those workplace situations. There's a new teacher-led kind of group to make sure that new teachers are being supported. I think that they do a good job here of really monitoring and then trying to make minor adjustments over a prolonged period of time, where it's not like a major paradigm shift in how things are run.

4. Please describe how you perceive interactions between leaders and followers within your school.

I think any time you have, anytime someone's in a position of leadership there's going to be some people who work well under that and some that are gonna, you know, doesn't matter who is in that position. So, I think you always are going to have those people that kind of buck against the system a little bit, but for the most part at this school I really feel like it's a positive interaction between our leadership and our teachers. I feel like it's fostered a lot...that relationship so that it does remain a positive one and I think our leaders have been very responsive to any grievances that, you know, if they're brought appropriately and they can see them then I think that there's been a good shift from there, good response as long as their made aware.

5. How about within other schools in the county?

I can't really speak to that leadership. I've never worked at another school in the county.

6. Please describe how you see yourself as an educational leader.

I believe that it's, obviously, my position to always try to put myself as a leader not only for my students, but among my peers and it's something that I really take to heart and try....I think that's staying abreast of current information in our field, our curriculum, you know, being professional and working together and having that collaborative atmosphere I think all plays a role and so I definitely try to foster that in how I exude myself within my classroom so that my students have that role model, but also within my relationships with my peers here and other teachers so that it keeps the environment of the school a positive one and that we can all work together for our kids. So, I think it's something you always keep working on and working towards, so....

7. Please describe how you fit into the leadership network of the county school system? Or is there is an opportunity for a leadership role outside of your classroom?

I think that they're really good about providing ways for our teachers to be involved in leadership opportunities if they want to. For instance, like I said, that new mentor/mentee program that they've started. I've been able to kind of start working with that. I think that yeah, I think that we definitely have some opportunities here if you're interested in being a leader there's definitely those opportunities within this school system.

8. Please describe your experiences with distributed leadership while in this position.

Yeah, I definitely feel like it's been a pretty overall positive leadership distribution here and I see that among all three of our admin.

9. How would you describe distributed leadership's influence on the subject that you teach?

I think that, as I said, that speaks to the culture of the school to begin with I believe so...and I feel like it doesn't matter what you teach that that's gonna enter into your classroom. If the culture is a positive one it's going to affect your classroom, but I definitely feel that, you know, even with math, even with my class, I just feel like there's support across the building not only from our admin, but also those supervisors that are observing us, there's always a...all of my observations have been very detailed and thorough and a discussion about how I can better my practices within my own classroom and so I think that the way that those practices are being taught to them, their leadership is showing through and affecting me and my classroom as well.

10. Please describe how you see distributed leadership influencing other subjects within your school.

The same thing. I think because we do have a team of different subject areas supervising different subject areas they're able to do the same thing that I'm experiencing in my class and again the overall culture of the school based on that leadership I think affects all subject areas as I said.

11. Describe how you perceive the implementation of distributed leadership at your school.

Again, that is shifted a little bit from the previous year to this year just because the leadership had been a recent change and so, for instance, last year I felt like the implementation was.....things were implemented in a different way because of the change in our admin. I think last year was kind of a learning curve of what, how things had been done and now I think we're seeing a lot more things being implemented this year. I still think we're on that learning curve a little bit. Any time you have new admin. We had two new admin come in last year. Any time you have new admin come in that implementation is sometimes a little bit rocky while people get used to changes and those people are getting used to how to implement in a way that doesn't shake up things too much and keep kind of the status quo. I think it's a work in progress.

12. Please tell me about how you would implement distributed leadership differently in your school or if leadership may be missing something that could have been a beneficial influence(s) on the subject that you teach.

Right now, and I think we're actually currently making this shift and I appreciate this shift because this is one of the things that last year I would've really sought to change is as thorough and supportive as those observations were with supervisors last year, my observations were not done by my subject area teachers or admin. I feel like we can give more constructive criticism if we are being observed by someone who teaches our subject area. That's actually, like I said, changing right now. I think they're slowly starting to implement that, but it's something that I definitely would have changed and I agree with. Let me see, I'm trying to think if there is anything that stands out. I think that we could find ways to involve our new teachers in a positive more way because sometimes coming in is new and you get that kind of cliquish feel where one group is a little bit more leading everything and then the new group feels like they can't break into that and they don't have a voice and so, again, I've talked to admin about that as well. I think that we need to figure out a way to provide a voice to all of our players a little bit better.

13. Please describe how teacher leaders are chosen at your school.

I can't speak to this as much just because I'm not in charge of making those decisions. I know that for instance, teachers that I've witnessed as like supervisors are typically more tenured teachers with experience and I'm sure that they're, I mean this is again my own assumption that their probably level of effectiveness is considered in that and so I think we're probably looking at more tenured teacher who are also showing success in their classroom are then chosen for a lot of the leadership positions to help our other teachers follow that lead. That would be my assumption again since I don't make those decisions, I'm not 100% sure.

14. Please share your perceptions of how teacher leaders are identified within other subjects in your school.

Again, from what I can tell as far as who I see as being leads within their PLC groups it's typically determined I think by years of experience and probably level of effectiveness just based on who I know are in those positions.

15. Please describe the differences that you see in identifying teacher leaders within the subject you teach and other subjects within your school.

I don't think math is any different within any of the other grade levels. I just think it's our particular situation right now. I don't notice any major differences based on subject area per say.

16. Please describe how distributed leadership has changed the academic capacity for the subject you teach at your school.

I think that any subject area, when you have strong leadership and those practices are successful and in place, I think it increases your academic capacity for your classroom no matter what because there's so many factors that you're no longer having to worry about within your classroom and you're able to focus more on the academics within that timeframe that you spend with your students whereas in the past when I've been in situations where leadership has been lacking a little more you're dealing with a lot more within that timeframe working with students and you feel like you're not able to give them the same academic quality of education because there's too much on your plate so to speak. I think that distribution of that leadership really just gives us the opportunity to have a larger capacity of academic opportunity within our classroom.

17. Please share your perceptions of how distributed leadership has changed the overall academic capacity at your school.

I would say probably the same thing for other teachers. Again, I feel like if those things are in place schoolwide and grade-level-wide then it gives everybody that opportunity to reach more students in an academic facet within their classroom.

18. Please describe how you see distributed leadership's influence(s) on the overall climate within your school.

I've obviously spoken to the climate of our school a lot. I think that it starts at the top and I think that our distributed leadership here has certainly influenced that. I think that we celebrate our teachers here a lot more from the top which creates that climate of positivity, of support, and then of collaboration. I feel like there's a lot of collaboration that our admin tries to involve all teachers in and so I think that all of those things really trickle into how we approach our jobs every day, how you come to work, and how you approach your classroom and then I think that our students seeing that and hearing that on our announcements and seeing just how our overall...it affects them and how they approach school and what they're able to give us.

19. Please describe how leadership at your school searches for resources to benefit academic achievement within your school.

I think that's something that ranges. I think that we're looking for outside resources, conferences that our teachers can attend. I think we are looking for countywide resources that are available and then I think that we do a good job of using the resources within our school for the most part to help everybody achieve more. So, I think that we do a good job of kind of having a widespread look at those resources

20. How does leadership at your school search for resources to benefit academic achievement within the subject that you teach?

Again, I think we have a lot of opportunity for in-school and out of school professional development that could help with that.

21. How does leadership search for resources to benefit academic achievement within other subjects at your school?

I would think that my cohorts would say the same thing. Those same opportunities are available to them as well within their subject area. I'm sure that it differs somewhat between opportunities that are available to them, different conferences or different professional development opportunities. But, I see we're also constantly looking at articles and things like that that can help us be more successful and looking at....I know that we try to look sometimes at other state's curriculum and try to see how we can use what's working in other places to work for our students within our own curriculum and within the guidelines that Tennessee has put forth for us and McCullough County. So, I think they would probably do the same thing that we do.

22. Please share with me anything else that you feel could be beneficial to the current study regarding distributed leadership, leadership within the subject you teach, and identifying leadership within that field of study.

I think that, obviously, really the most beneficial thing in getting an accurate representation would be to look at different demographics, different schools, different areas. My feelings towards what needs to be in place and the benefit of those leadership practices stays the same, but whether or not my answers to how it's being distributed within my school could definitely change. I don't think other than that.

1. Please introduce yourself to me and describe your position at the school.

My name is Tina. I'm an 8th grade ELA teacher at James Fenimore Cooper Middle School.

2. Please describe your experiences as far as the leadership practices that you have encountered at this school and within the county.

As far as within the county, I can only really speak to this school. My experiences thus far with the leadership seems to be the leadership seems strong and we have a principal, assistant principals, and then we have another lady who's on the admin team who helps as well. So, there is a hierarchy within that, but there's also each of those principals and assistant principals kind of manages a particular grade level. They attend other meetings outside of the school building throughout the week where they're meeting with other principals and people from downtown. When our principal comes back from one of those meetings, she will send us an email just to basically hit the high points of her takeaway. So, I feel like those are communicated through email. We also have, like each grade level has a grade level chair and I know that our principal meets with each of these people. They have their own subgroup. They meet and so I feel like that's a good thing because it's almost like one person going in to represent maybe what your grade level would want to make sure that administration hears. So far, it's been good.

3. Please describe some of the workplace situations that have been catalysts for change in leadership practices.

I really don't have an answer. I haven't seen a whole bunch of change over time.

4. Please describe how you perceive interactions between leaders and followers within your school.

So, I feel like in this particular cohort of 8th grade that I have right now, as far as the students, I feel like there are only a few that are actually really strong leaders that'll speak up if something is not what needs to happen. I feel like there's only a few who I would really call as leaders. I think a lot of them are followers. I don't feel like in middle school there are a lot of strong leaders. I think it's in there. I like they're not comfortable yet to let it out I guess. I think it's important, like when you do see a leader and maybe people are following them for the wrong reasons, to kind of show them, hey you know what? you've got leadership qualities. You need to make sure you're using those leadership qualities for good because people are going to follow you. You may not realize that they're following you, but they're following you and so really think about your choices.

5. How about within other schools in the county?

Again, I can't really...I haven't worked in another county school.

6. Please describe how you see yourself as an educational leader.

I feel like...I know that I'm a strong teacher, but I feel like that just has to speak for itself. You've got to prove that over time. I feel like I just kind of come in, do my thing, don't make a big deal out of it, just do my thing and let that speak for itself. I think at times, especially if I'm the new person then I want to make sure I'm doing all of these procedures the way like...if they say do this, this, and this, then I'm going to do this, this, and this. After I've been there a while and I know the structure and I'm comfortable, then I may kind of go my own way and say No, I've done this before and I know what that's going to look like. I'm going to do it this way type. But I'm also very...I'm not disrespectful to authority. I'm not going to go that far, but it's just trial and error. After a while, if you know that's not going to work...I'm not afraid to do the other thing that I know would work.

7. Please describe how you fit into the leadership network of the county school system? Or is there is an opportunity for a leadership role outside of your classroom?

There is...so I know that within our building each...so we have like an ELA chairperson and so she will represent our school in larger systemwide meetings where she will go and bring back that information and then we will have ELA meetings within our building and she will kind of head that up. So, I know that that's an opportunity for leadership where she'll go and meet with the ELA person in charge downtown and come back. So, I know that that is something that's outside of the school, outside of the building that has to do with it.

8. Please describe your experiences with distributed leadership while in this position.

Ok, if I'm understanding this question correctly, I think we're talking about not just one person kind of being in charge of the whole place. So, we definitely, although... I mean we do have...I guess our principal is ultimately, I guess at the end of the day she's the one that is in charge of this whole place, but I do feel like it's broken down into more of like you're in charge of this area, I'm going to trust you to be in charge of this area, but if I need to step in, I will if I feel like that needs to happen. But, we have certain things...like I don't just get emails only from the principal.

9. How would you describe distributed leadership's influence on the subject that you teach?

Again, I guess this is kind of going back to the fact that I said that we have, each school has like an ELA, and they have that for all the subjects, I'm just speaking about ELA because that's what I know about. Ms. Dove is her name and she actually teaches 7th grade, but she's the one who represents our school to go in and hear what important things they have to say to us or what important things that we want to bring up. That's kind of the flow from downtown goes through her and then onto us. There's also one teacher from each grade level who has been attending a professional development during the school day through downtown, like telling us to come. Then that's also an opportunity. She'll say you guys went to this, tell us some takeaways that you had from that.

10. Please describe how you see distributed leadership influencing other subjects within your school.

Same thing that I have for the ELA department, they have this within math, they have this with science, social studies, so I know that they all have that. I would even guess that even probably the SPED group. There's probably somebody who's their representative that goes and brings new...I don't know that for sure, but I know that it's not just for ELA.

11. Describe how you perceive the implementation of distributed leadership at your school.

It's highly encouraged...there's not like there's this extra pressure, although I guess if nobody ever volunteers, then there would be this push like somebody's got to be the girls' basketball coach although we have a girls' basketball coach, but for example, you know. It seems like there's not one or two people who are trying to do it all which is a good thing. I'm thinking about like right now, basketball just started up so of course we've got a girls' basketball coach, boys' basketball coach, the cheer coach, the dance coach, but then you know, then they have to get other people to do the books and the scoreboard and all these other things, the PEP Rally person and just the fact that...I feel like everybody tries to chip in and do what they can so that not one person feels like it's all on me. I feel like it's distributed.

12. Redacted

13. Please describe how teacher leaders are chosen at your school.

Ok, some, depending on the position, some are volunteers, like “Oh, I’ll do that. As far as the team leader, I don’t know for sure if that’s a volunteer, like I’ll do it this year, you do it next year...where the school I left before, it was kind of a volunteer. However, I’m just thinking about the people that I know that are team leaders and the people who do evaluations within the building. I think it just depends on what leadership opportunity that you’re wanting to do. Some of it is volunteer and some of it is performance based.

14. Please share your perceptions of how teacher leaders are identified within other subjects in your school.

I guess it’s just the fact of like who is the chair for each of those and I honestly couldn’t tell you. I know who my ELA chair is and I know that there are other chairs in the building. I couldn’t identify who they are. I know they’re out there. I don’t know. I feel like, when we have our meetings and our ELA chair is telling us the things that she needs to tell us, I feel like everybody kind of puts themselves in that spot. She’s just the bearer of the news. You can agree, disagree, whatever. A lot of times her job is like I’m supposed to go back with our thoughts on this. She is just kind of the middleman I guess from these people downtown who are really sending out the information. I think she even prefaces a lot of her stuff like that. Like, don’t be mad at me, but we’ve been asked to do this. I’m not the one telling you to do this. I think the perceptions are fine. If it weren’t here then that could be me and she is the news bearer.

15. Please describe the differences that you see in identifying teacher leaders within the subject you teach and other subjects within your school.

I don’t know if I can speak on the differences because I don’t even really know who the other ones are. I mean, I know who does evaluation and I know who the 7th grade team leader is, but I don’t. . . and she’s a social studies teacher, but I don’t know for sure if she’s even the math chairperson. I just don’t know.

16. Redacted

17. Redacted

18. Please describe how you see distributed leadership's influence(s) on the overall climate within your school.

I view it as a positive thing. Nobody feels like they ... at least I don't perceive that anybody feels like they have to do something and everybody just has this thought of I need to contribute something. What role do I play? If you're brand new and you're like ok, really what I need to contribute now is staying afloat, learning what I'm doing in here, and I can volunteer for this right now and next year or next semester I can add a little more, but I don't feel like anybody is making feel less than because I'm not signed up to do all these things. I just feel like this doesn't work for me.

19. Please describe how leadership at your school searches for resources to benefit academic achievement within your school.

Oh goodness, I feel like that's out the roof. I feel like they're always looking for resources. The lady that I told you that comes to meet with our PLCs every single week, she knows about all these different things to share with us. I think that's part of what she does in her free time...it's like, "Hey this is out there, this is out there. Did you know that..." We met as a grade level earlier this week and she asked, "Did you know it'll do this and this?" So, they're constantly trying to make us aware of what's out there.

20. How does leadership at your school search for resources to benefit academic achievement within the subject that you teach?

Same kind of thing.

21. How does leadership search for resources to benefit academic achievement within other subjects at your school?

I'm sure it's the same. I mean I've never sat in on a PLC for math. I don't have time for that, but I'm sure that she's like "Hey. Take a look at this!" I mean, we do this even within collaboration, you know, they're like "Hey, have you heard of ...? No, no more red ink. Have you heard of this? Have you heard of this? It's just kind of this network. No, I haven't. Let me look into that. You run across something...It does feel like everybody, at least in this building, is on the same team.

22. Redacted

1. Please introduce yourself to me and describe your position at the school.

Hi Darrell. My name is Kiersten and I teach ELA at James Fenimore Cooper Middle School.

2. Please describe your experiences as far as the leadership practices that you have encountered at this school and within the county.

Well, at my school there have been several leadership initiatives, if you will. One of them that is actually from the district level down to our school is our Positive Behavior Intervention System, PBIS for short, and that is a practice that we're putting in place to build leaders.

3. Redacted

4. Please describe how you perceive interactions between leaders and followers within your school.

I hate to have to sound so negative with this response, but I feel that if we're speaking from a perspective of leaders as administrators, I find that the staff doesn't have a whole lot of respect. They don't show a whole lot of respect towards them. There's one in particular that people I feel do show respect towards, but the other ones I feel are like in staff meetings people talk over them, they ignore emails, and some of it is as I have been told directly by some people, it's because of who it's from. So, they place judgement or they whatever. I'm not going to do what he says because it's him. The followers have a tendency to ignore requests and kind of do what they want instead of following the directives from that leadership.

5. How about within other schools in the county?

It depends on the school. A lot of my friends when they speak of their...we had two staff members leave here last year and go to another school and when I was speaking to them about their new school, they were like, "It's night and day." They feel valued. They feel respected. They don't feel like they have a bunch of management tasks on their plate that are unable to be accomplished by the end of the day or the end of the week and then I speak to other schools who feel like they are drowning like we are, like it's just so much to keep up with that the wheel never stops. So, it really depends on the school and it really depends on, for example, I've heard some teachers that were at the same school and they changed administration and it was like, "under this person, it was like this" and then "under this person, it's been like this" and a lot of times I'll hear a negative change from one to another. In various cases, I have heard if a principal is put into a different school, that it has changed the place, I know that Emily Dickinson High School, we just

got a guy who left district. He didn't want to be at the district anymore. He wanted to be a principal and he is revered and respected and student-centered and people want to flock to work for a man like that. People want to go there. So, I would have to say depends on the school and it really seems to me depends on the area in which the school is in.

6. Please describe how you see yourself as an educational leader.

Well, I try to come to work every single day with a positive attitude. I try to celebrate people's successes and encourage them when they have areas where they need to strengthen. I am the type of teacher in my classroom that I like to provide an environment that really does support student learning.

7. Please describe how you fit into the leadership network of the county school system? Or is there is an opportunity for a leadership role outside of your classroom?

Every school is pretty much tasked with forming a leadership team. Even though that is not part of the larger county school system, it is kind of an initiative from the district to have a leadership team so, it's kind of related there. I like to bring ideas. There are opportunities outside for leadership roles. You can also run professional developments. That's another leadership opportunity that you can have in the district and there's several different types of things that you can join at the district level. MEAC, the McCullough Education Union, you can be a member of that. You can participate in that. That's also leadership...you know, encouraging people in the building to realize that there's a lot of things that are available for us and I try to make sure that I remind...I don't keep those secrets to myself. I think they need to be shared.

8. Please describe your experiences with distributed leadership while in this position.

This is a tough one. I feel that, again, we're struggling with this notion of best leadership practices coming from the top coming down and I feel like there is a lack of communication or a lack of follow through a lot of times with some of these initiatives which makes leadership...putting leadership practices into play very challenging because the messages aren't clear or it fizzles out or we give up to quick or any number of those types of things. Workplace situations, I feel that this is a very family-oriented school. We have a great, small community. There's no room for misinterpretation.

9. How would you describe distributed leadership's influence on the subject that you teach?

I feel that I constantly have to look at best practices in my classroom. So, I utilize a curriculum that is heavily research-based. It has been tried and tested throughout the United States and only growth has been shown as a result of it. So, that is one thing that I do within my....the leadership's influence on me coming from the district or from the...with our curriculum administrator, working with them to try to decide what is the best curriculum to use with the students at our school. So, that's probably the number one influence on my class.

10. Please describe how you see distributed leadership influencing other subjects within your school.

Sadly, at this moment, I feel that it's not distributed well, for a lack of better words to use.

11. Describe how you perceive the implementation of distributed leadership at your school.

Leadership team is all volunteer basis and then those who want to be on leadership team nominate a staff member who they feel is going to be the one who is going to facilitate it well and follow through with goals and hold people to high expectations. So, that's all volunteer. From the other parts, if we're looking at top down from the administration, I feel that the implementation of it comes from the collective administration coming together to brainstorm. They argue things out and they have the understanding that no matter what the consensus is, and I really value this about our principals, that it doesn't matter at the end of the day if we end up disagreeing, if we come to a consensus, then we're all sticking to it. I really value that. So, one person isn't going to go out of the administrators' room and say, "but I voted for whatever." It's gonna be "nope, this is it. We're all on the same page." So, I do respect that. Absolutely respect that they have that collective vision and they can argue it out and they still come to a consensus even though they might disagree. So, I appreciate that.

12. Redacted

13. Please describe how teacher leaders are chosen at your school.

So, depends again on the area. Leadership team is volunteer. So, leadership team is all volunteer and then the leadership team members nominate the person who is going to facilitate. Other teacher leaders in the building, those of us that like to lead clubs and do things with students, that is all again volunteer basis. What other opportunities are there for leadership? (Fire alarm went off while she was speaking). "Sorry about that for when you are listening again. That's going to be fun." So, most of it's volunteer basis for the teacher leaders. (Another teacher came in about the alarm). So, I think that's it. Most of it's volunteer basis.

14. Please share your perceptions of how teacher leaders are identified within other subjects in your school.

A lot of it is sadly based on teacher test scores and how they did with student growth and achievement the year before or through teacher observations, we have an observation team that goes into do the evaluations and a lot of times they'll come back as an administrative team and they'll say, hey, so and so is highlighted. We want to ask them if they can lead a professional development on XYZ. So, last year for example (a couple of students needed hall passes) So, like I said, they get together and they do the...after they do evaluations, they'll come back together and they will celebrate a success and then they'll go to that teacher. Like last year for example, we had a teacher who implemented (unintelligible due to alarm) really well in her lesson and so (Intercom: Teachers ignore the fire alarm. This is not...NEVER MIND EVERYONE EVACUATE). (I evacuated with Kiersten and her students. I stood off to the side outside as students were lined up during the fire alarm).

15. Please describe the differences that you see in identifying teacher leaders within the subject you teach and other subjects within your school.

Well, my department is really, really small so there's really only three of us in the department to identify teacher leaders and each of us have different strengths. So, for my content area, it's really easy. Identifying teacher leaders again in the other subject areas, again, I really don't really have an opportunity to go and view the teachers, but I do get the opportunity to hear from those teachers at professional development. So, again I think they're mostly identified like I said through the administration observation team.

16. Please describe how distributed leadership has changed the academic capacity for the subject you teach at your school.

This is the first year that I can actually say that I feel like the distributed leadership is actually having an academic impact because we are now instead of just being asked to do it, which it was requirement before, but there was no follow through, there is absolute follow through this year with having professional learning communities. Administrators are sitting in. So, there is a lot more academic discussion occurring in our school as a result of this.

17. Redacted

18. Redacted

19. Please describe how leadership at your school searches for resources to benefit academic achievement within your school.

We have...so leadership, they search for resources. A lot of the information they get comes from the principals' meetings that they have once a month and they bring back information to staff meetings. A lot of our resources are disseminated at staff meetings where we have different people presenting about different things. Another way that they do these searches is they utilize coaches that we have in the district to come out and lead various topics,

20. Redacted

21. How does leadership search for resources to benefit academic achievement within other subjects at your school?

Same way I would say as in the previous question... because it doesn't just apply to my subject, you know, luckily a lot of the things that they send us to, the conferences in particular, have so many facets that we can study. So, they have developing leaders and not followers, they've got differentiation, they've got movement in the classroom, brain research. So, we can go to the things that we think would affect our audience, our students, and then the staff we think we could reach as well.

- 22 Please share with me anything else that you feel could be beneficial to the current study regarding distributed leadership, leadership within the subject you teach, and identifying leadership within that field of study.

Again, I feel like it really....leadership needs to be reevaluated as 21st century learners are in our schools and the way that it looks now should look completely different than it did in the 1970's, but we still walk into classroom with these perfect rows and these hard chairs, and I really think as a whole every district top down needs to start recognizing and planning for a budget surplus to be able to change the settings inside our classrooms. They need to be in a setting where it's more conducive to learning and it also needs to be in a setting that's more conducive to the current 21st century work environments, you know, open settings, having flexible seating, being able to sit on a balance ball instead of a hard, plastic chair, being able to camp out on a pillow instead of sitting in a chair, or having the ability to be able to stand. As far as leadership within the subject I teach, identifying, in my particular school, in my subject, it is not very hard to find the leadership, because there's only three of us that do that content, but district wide, we have the coaches that come into our building and I feel like they're doing a really nice job with identifying teachers at various schools like they, you know, said well, this teacher over here does a really great job talking about data. We want you to present at this district learning day and share your learning. So, I feel that is good, but I feel like they are so overwhelmed with how many schools that they have, they can't identify leaders in every building because they don't have the quality time in every school that some schools get. So, that needs to be improved where it's more distributed. So, I feel like they could do better by giving them smaller caseloads so we can do a better job of identifying these teachers, but I feel like they keep making cuts to staff which is what we need to be able to educate. Identifying leadership in the field of study, again, goes back to giving smaller case loads to the coaches and the ones that are going around from school to school trying to identify these teachers. We do have a big, pretty solid district learning day where teachers lead most of the content and very little of it comes from the top. It comes from your equal which I think has been an absolute shining part of our district in the last I say, how long has it been, see he's been here 4 years. I would say the last 8 years, I have watched that grow and change. They finally listened, "We don't want you to preach at us. We want to learn from our peers and see what they're doing in their class." They can just keep doing that. They need to be better about that and communication, again, I think is something that's really big that needs shared visions, shared missions from the top down and making sure that we're actually seeing the fruits of our labor as far as what the district sees.

APPENDIX F: TRAVEL/RESEARCH JOURNAL

September 27 – November 20, 2019

First trip to McCullough County – September 27, 2019

4:00 am – woke up

5:02 am – left home

8:58 am – reached McCullough County

Being from West Virginia, I was struck by the size of both schools that I visited this day. I was impressed by the knowledge and experience of the three teachers that I interviewed on this first trip. The first teacher was especially knowledgeable about her school, district, different forms of leadership, and a variety of other educational topics. Student behavior was like night and day. Students were very courteous and well-behaved at the first school. I witnessed horrible student behavior at the second school.

Second trip to McCullough County – October 18, 2019

4:00 am – woke up

5:06 am – left home

9:08 am – made it to McCullough County

I was scheduled to interview two teachers at two schools again. One of the teachers worked at one of the schools that I visited on the first trip. One of the schools was a new school for me. The teacher at the new school introduced me to two friends so I performed four interviews on this day. This day presented a variety of newer teachers and very experienced teachers.

Third trip to McCullough County – October 25, 2019

4:00 am – woke up

5:12 am – left home

9:16 am – reached McCullough County

I performed two interviews at the two schools that I visited on the first trip to McCullough County. I made the same mental notes about student behavior at each school. Again, both teachers/participants were very experienced and knowledgeable.

Fourth trip to McCullough County – November 1, 2019

5:00 am – woke up

6:12 am – left home

10:18 am – reached McCullough County

I interviewed two teachers on this trip at two schools that I had not been to before. Both schools have a large population of students facing low socioeconomic challenges. I was very surprised to discover this about the second school. I have stayed at hotels in this area of the county before for work. The area seems somewhat upscale, but the teacher that I interviewed explained that the school is not. The school is very diverse though with students originally from 18 different countries among the student body. The school also has a sister school in another country. Very cool!

Fifth trip to McCullough County – November 8, 2019

5:00 am – woke up

6:20 am – left home

11:15 am – reached McCullough County

I interviewed two teachers again this day. Both teachers were from schools that I had visited before.

Sixth trip to McCullough County – November 15, 2019

4:00 am – woke up

5:14 am – left home

7:23 am – one teacher emails to postpone her interview

8:11 am – second teacher emails to let me know that she stayed home sick. I was unable to reschedule with her due to my work schedule.

8:30 am – turned around and drove back to West Virginia

Seventh trip to McCullough County – November 20, 2019

4:00 am – woke up

5:20 am – left home

9:50 am – reached McCullough County

I conducted the 14th and final interview for this research with a very knowledgeable teacher that I feel will be in leadership at this school or within the district for a long time. Very impressive.

The fire alarm went off during this interview so I had to leave the building and stand outside with everyone else.

3:40 pm – observed a faculty meeting at a school that I had not been to previously. This was a great experience. This school is very impressive. The principal, staff, and teachers seem like a family. High levels of distributed leadership as multiple teachers presented about different initiatives that are going on in the school. There was much rejoicing as all of the teachers were

notified that they are getting new laptops. By the time this meeting was over, I was considering applying for a job here. A group of wonderful professionals.

APPENDIX G: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Observation Protocol Example based on Creswell & Poth, 2018

Duration of Meeting: 35 minutes – 3:40pm to 4:15pm EST

Herman Melville Middle School – November 20, 2019

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
Met with Principal Zawada before the meeting. He shared his team's three main goals and shared how years ago the schools had lost about a third of its students and 17 teachers due to zoning.	Very friendly and helpful Overcomer
Pre-meeting chatter	Family atmosphere Warmth in the room How the holidays should be
Tutoring assignments	Really impressed by the caring attitudes expressed by all teachers
Angel Tree gifts for Christmas	Again, teachers going out of their way to help their students
Qualitative Study- rezoning	I am not the only qualitative study that these teachers have done. Very helpful people in this county
Staff Concerns – TVAAS scores – leadership team meeting earlier in the month – humility – servant leadership – shorten parent/teacher meetings – special ed meetings once per month – professional development in Atlanta and Nashville	I have not seen a more caring group of professionals in the 23 years since I got out of the military
Goal # 1 – Increasing TCAP Achievement by 10%	
Goal # 2 – Decreasing disruptive behaviors	Very surprised by the number of fighting incidents. Very impressed by the decrease in the number of fights and suspensions compared to the prior school year

Goal # 3 – Developing MYP Lesson/Unit plans

Very cool training
plans and destinations

Special Announcement – All teachers get new laptops

So glad I witnessed this.
Pandemonium. Joy.
It was like Christmas.

Summary

Being from West Virginia
and not a fan of the
seemingly constant striking
by WV teachers, I found this
experience to be very
rewarding. Anyone that is
down on our society or down
on mankind should spend a
couple of hours with the
people that work at this
school. These teachers and
and staff members are all
class.

Several teachers reported to
the group during this meeting
illustrating the distribution of
leadership that takes place in
this school.

APPENDIX H: CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

A NESTED-CASE STUDY INVESTIGATING DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL

Darrell M. Ashworth
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study on distributed leadership at the middle school level. You were selected as a possible participant because you are 18 years of age or older, and you are a middle school math/science/English/social studies teacher. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Darrell Ashworth, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to understand the perceptions of middle school math, English, science, and social studies teachers regarding the influence of distributed leadership on the subjects they teach.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in a 22-question research interview that will be audio recorded. This should take approximately 45 minutes.
2. Review the transcripts of our interview for accuracy.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include potential improvement in educational leadership, potential improvement in academic capacity at the middle school level, and potential improvement in student learning due to the direct link between educational leadership and student learning.

Compensation: Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Each participant that completes an interview will receive a \$25.00 VISA gift card.

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 record.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. ☐
- Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- 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.

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 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 at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Darrell Ashworth. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at (606) 622-9150 or dashworth@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Judy Shoemaker, at jshoemaker@liberty.edu

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., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information 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 me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date