

5-2016

Teacher Leaders' Perceptions Of Their Influence On The Distributed Leadership Process At A Middle School

Katherine Susan Garand
University of New England

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dune.une.edu/theses>



Part of the [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), [Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons](#), and the [Junior High, Intermediate, Middle School Education and Teaching Commons](#)

© 2016 Katherine Garand

Preferred Citation

Garand, Katherine Susan, "Teacher Leaders' Perceptions Of Their Influence On The Distributed Leadership Process At A Middle School" (2016). *All Theses And Dissertations*. 53.
<https://dune.une.edu/theses/53>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at DUNE: DigitalUNE. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses And Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DUNE: DigitalUNE. For more information, please contact bkenyon@une.edu.

Teacher Leaders' Perceptions of Their Influence on the
Distributed Leadership Process at a Middle School

By Katherine Susan Garand

Master of Education, in Curriculum and Teaching, Fitchburg State College, Fitchburg, Ma (2009)

Bachelor of Arts, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Ma (2003)

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Affiliated Faculty
of the College of Graduate and Professional Studies
at the University of New England

Portland & Biddeford, Maine

April, 2016

Steven Moskowitz, Ed.D.
Lead Advisor

Suzan Nelson, Ed.D
Secondary Advisor

Scott McCarthy, Ph.D
Affiliate Member

Copyright

Katherine Susan Garand © 2016

Katherine Garand
May 2016
Educational Leadership

TEACHER LEADERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE DISTRIBUTED
LEADERSHIP PROCESS AT A MIDDLE SCHOOL

Abstract

This interpretive, qualitative study explores the perspectives of teacher leaders within the middle school setting as to how they perceive their role influences the distributed leadership process. Five significant themes, with subthemes emerged from the data as a result of the analysis process. These themes were identified as *Leadership style, Empowerment, Social Influence, Commitment and Job Role Confusion*. This data allowed the researcher to develop several conclusions, including the need to clarify the specific responsibilities associated with the team leader role and the importance of developing more appropriate professional development opportunities for team leaders, specifically in the areas of team building or leadership strategies and data literacy. Recommendations include revisiting the role of the team leaders in the decision-making process within the distributed leadership team, and evaluating the job role responsibilities in relation to the corresponding level of compensation and allotted work time.

Keywords: *Distributed leadership, leadership team, teacher leaders, leadership style, empowerment, social influence, commitment and job role confusion*

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the many people in my life who have supported me during this challenging journey. Sharing my success with them makes all the hard times worth it.

A sincere thank you goes to my friend Yona Rose and to the other members of my research team. Your support and friendship has meant the world to me. To my advisors, Dr. Moskowitz and Dr. Nelson I cannot thank you enough for your continued support, guidance and above all your patience with my persistence. To my affiliate advisor and friend Dr. Scott McCarthy, who gave up his free time during an important career transition to help guide me along. I thank you so very much, words cannot express. To the wonderful staff at the University of New England, especially Dr. Collay and the many instructors who have offered me personal advice and attention along the way, I am forever grateful.

To my principal Shelley Somers, thank you for your continued support and enthusiasm for teacher leadership. I'll never forget your kind words of support and encouragement along the way. To the other administrators who allowed me to work with their leadership teams and paved the way for my work with them I cannot thank you enough.

To the team leaders in my district, my participants, who graciously gave up their free time to speak openly with me about their personal experiences I simply cannot explain how truly impressed I am with each and every one of you. I thank you immensely.

To the many colleagues and friends who never forgot to ask me "How's the dissertation coming along?" as they walked by me in the break room, I thank you for making my hard work feel important and for reminding me that people care.

Finally, my thanks go out to my family, especially, my daughter Josie, who was only a few weeks old as I attended orientation. I thank you for letting mommy read you research articles

instead of picture books from time to time and for always reminding me why it was so important that I achieve this dream. To my husband, I promise to dedicate more time to you and make up for all the time you sacrificed to allow me to reach this personal goal. To my grandparents who always valued education, their lives have forever inspired me to make my own life and the lives of others I touch meaningful. To my amazing parents, my wonderful in-laws, my sister and my sisters in-law, I love you all so much and I cannot thank you enough for your emotional support throughout this process. This has been an intellectual and emotional journey like no other and I owe it all to your support and love.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Purpose of the Study	2
Research Questions	3
Conceptual Framework	4
Assumptions	6
Scope and Limitations	6
Rationale and Significance	7
Definition of Terms	7
Conclusion	8
Chapter Two: A Review of the Literature	10
Context of Teacher Leadership and Teacher Perceptions	10
Purpose Statement	11
The Literature Review Process	12
The Teacher Leadership Model	13
Identifying the Teacher Leader	13
Transformative and Transformational Approaches	15
Enlisting Others	16
Distributed Leadership	17
Effective Teams	18
Teacher Leadership Theories	18

Situational Leadership Theory	19
Transformative Leadership Theory	20
Servant Leadership Theory	21
Impact of the Teacher Leadership Model on School Leadership	22
Benefits of Institutionalizing a Distributed Leadership Model	23
Mutual Support between Principal and Teacher Leaders	25
Conceptual Framework	26
Conclusion	28
Chapter Three: Methodology	31
Study Setting	32
Participants	33
Data Collection	33
Data Analysis	34
Participant Rights	35
Study Limitations	36
Chapter Four: Analysis	37
Analysis Method	38
Presentation of Results	40
Participants' Demographic Information	40
Identifying the Significant Themes	40
Leadership Style	43
The Authoritative or Assertive Team Leader	43
The Reflective Team Leader	45

Team Leader as Task Facilitator	47
Team Leader as Representative of the Team	48
Empowerment	49
Recruitment	50
Decision-making	51
Information Sharing	53
Social Influence	54
Collaboration with Other Team Leaders	55
Support from Administrators	56
Dealing with Conflict	57
Team Leader as Liaison	58
Commitment	59
Time Obligation	59
Compensation	61
Professional Development	62
Job Role Confusion	64
Unclear Expectations of Responsibility	65
Unclear Level of Authority	66
Summary	68
Chapter Five: Conclusion	70
Interpretation of Findings	70
Research Question One	71
Empowerment	71

Commitment and job role clarification	71
Social influence and leadership style: Team leader as facilitator	72
Research Question Two	73
Empowerment: Decision-making and information sharing	73
Empowerment, leadership style and social influence	74
Research Question Three	75
Empowerment: Decision-making & social influence	75
Leadership style	76
Implications	77
Team Leaders Learn from Each Other	77
Principals and Administrators	77
This District	78
Students and Parents	78
Districts Who Have Yet to Embrace Team Leaders	79
Recommendations for Action	79
Recommendations for Further Study	80
Conclusion	81
References	84
Appendix A: Demographic Survey Questions for Team Leaders	92
Appendix B: Interview Questions for: <i>Team Leaders</i>	93
Appendix C: UNE Consent for Participation in Research	94
Appendix D: UNE IRB Exemption Form	97

List of Tables

Table 1. School District Demographic Information	32
Table 2. Themes Presented within the Coding Process	41

List of Figures

Figure 1. Teacher Leadership Model at the Middle School Level	5
Figure 2. Themes Presented within Sources	42
Figure 3. Themes Presented within References	43

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Demographic Survey Questions for Team Leaders	92
Appendix B: Interview Questions for: <i>Team Leaders</i>	93
Appendix C: UNE Consent for Participation in Research	94
Appendix D: UNE IRB Exemption Form	97

Chapter One: Introduction

An organized group of people working towards a common goal is often referred to as a team (Hawkins, 2014). When members of a team take turns stepping forward as leader in order to match the most appropriate leadership technique with a given task, it is known as distributing the leadership responsibilities (Northouse, 2012). Within the field of education distributed leadership is particularly beneficial when dealing with complex problems, such as school reform (Mirvis & Gunning, 2006). Distributed models have been found to empower multiple levels of leadership, such as principals and teachers to enact change within their schools (Mayer, Donaldson, LeChasseur, Welton, & Cobb, 2013).

Middle schools, in particular, are often designed to include teams of teachers with one teacher designated as the official team leader (Grenda, 2014). The team leader works along with the administration to discuss data-driven action and progress of teachers and students towards meeting school goals. (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2013).

Organizational structures, inclusive of shared leadership increase the efficiency of task distribution and completion, foster innovative thinking and promote creativity (Creanor, 2014). Distributed models involve more people in the leadership process; therefore, unlocking more potential for new, successful leaders to emerge (Spillane, 2006).

The principal plays a significant role in determining the success of a teacher leadership model (Aydin, Sarier & Uysal, 2013; Fullan, 1993). Institutionalizing teacher leadership models has also been linked to school improvement (Harris, 2003). Paramount to this study is the hypothesis that unlocking the real potential of the teacher leadership model starts with understanding the perceptions of the teacher leaders themselves towards their positional influence on the whole-school leadership team. By inviting teacher leaders to discuss their

perspectives on their positional influence on their school's distributed leadership style, researchers open the door to discussing beliefs and perceptions, which shape and define the school culture itself. School culture is an aspect of school climate that is essentially, defined by the beliefs of the members of the school community (Van Houtte & Van Maele, 2011). Therefore, this qualitative study explores teacher leader perceptions of how their leadership position influences the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting.

Statement of the Problem

It is evident that more research is needed to discover how team leaders feel their teacher leadership position influences the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting. Several areas of weakness exist within the field of educational research surrounding teacher leaders' perceptions of their leadership roles. One major problem is that teachers who lead do not always perceive themselves to be formal leaders as they may only associate the concept of school leadership with official administrative roles (Angelle, & DeHart, 2011). Research exploring teacher-leader perceptions of their leadership role by the teachers themselves is also lacking (Angelle & DeHart, 2011; Northouse, 2012). Without knowing how teachers themselves perceive their own leadership roles within the context of school leadership, there is no way to determine the potential for team leaders to influence school leadership teams, such as within a distributed leadership model.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine how team leaders working within the middle school setting feel their teacher leadership positions influence the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting. Key measures of influence include the discovery of how teacher leaders' feelings of empowerment affect their commitment level to their workplace and

their success with specific types of task completion (Avidov-Ungar, Friedman & Olshtain, 2014; Aydin, Sarier & Uysal, 2013; Mayer, Donaldson, LeChasseur, Welton, & Cobb, 2013).

Specific types of tasks, which the teacher leaders feel are most appropriate for, or most successfully carried out by the teacher leader role, have been identified in previous research. Identifying these perceptions allows the teacher leadership teams to define the potential for team leaders to more significantly impact change within their school. Connections have been discovered between heightened feelings of *empowerment* (Avidov-Ungar, Friedman & Olshtain, 2014) and *commitment* (Aydin, Sarier & Uysal, 2013) to one's place of employment when that individual maintains an official leadership role within the organization or school where they work. Improving the knowledge base for team leader perceptions towards their job position allows for an increased feeling of empowerment. This qualitative study will explore the concept of teacher leadership, as perceived by teacher leaders who lead their grade-level teams known as team leaders, in the middle school setting. Asking team leaders to share their perspectives of their positional influence on their roles within the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting gives recognition to the importance of their feelings. By better understanding team leader perspectives of their positional influence within the distributed leadership model, school districts can more effectively develop the professional supports needed to unlock the potential of the teacher leaders and the potential positive effects their role can have on change within schools.

Research Questions

Teachers functioning as team leaders within their middle school place of employment during the 2015-16, school year were invited to share their thoughts on interview questions, which support these main research questions (Appendix B).

1. In what ways might team leaders feel differently about their school's leadership processes since they have become an official leader within their school's organizational structure?
2. What workplace experiences have been significant in terms of shaping the team leaders' perceptions of the distributed leadership process within their school setting?
3. How does being in a position of leadership impact the team leaders' feelings towards interactions with other teachers who are not in an official position of leadership?

Conceptual Framework

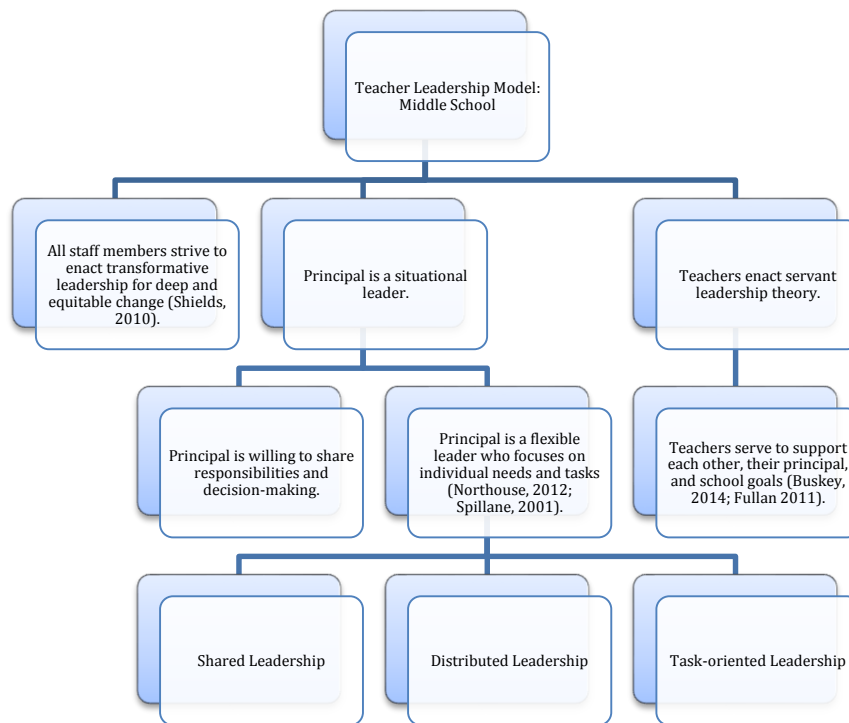
Middle schools in the United States tend to structure academic teams by grouping cross-discipline teachers. The common, preexisting team structure makes the middle school environment an excellent focus for studying teacher leader perceptions of how their leadership position influences the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting. (Grenda, 2014). Involving teachers with the leadership of the school fosters a feeling of empowerment and encourages teachers to become more satisfied with their work as members and leaders of the school (Avidov-Ungar, Friedman, & Olshtain, 2014; Aydin, Sarier & Uysal, 2013). The concept of one's sense of satisfaction with their work as a leader has been explored through research, but not through the lens of the teacher leaders themselves (Angelle & DeHart, 2011).

This study views teacher leadership as a component of a larger, more complex organizational structure consisting of multiple levels of leadership. The various theoretical lenses through which each position should be viewed further complicate the dynamics of a teacher leadership model within a middle school setting (Figure 1).

Figure 1 graphically depicts the relationship between the teacher leader role, the role of the principal, and key leadership theories that work to support the teacher leadership model within a middle school setting.

Figure 1

Teacher Leadership Model at the Middle School Level



As Figure 1 demonstrates, the relationship between the various levels of leaders is essential to how each of these levels enacts their leadership strategies. It is proposed in this study that one positive relationship, theoretically speaking, would exist between a principal who is a situational leader, using distributed leadership methods with a teacher leadership team, consisting of teacher leaders who demonstrate characteristics of transformative or servant leadership strategies. Among these levels of leaders within a distributed leadership model, there is an overall effort for transformative, deep and equitable change (Shields, 2010). In order to accomplish transformative change a more accurate understanding of how these leaders perceive their positional influence on the distributed leadership processes within the middle school setting is needed.

While interacting with school leaders and teacher leaders consideration is given to the various types of leadership styles that may be demonstrated by the school leaders. Research suggests that certain types of leadership styles tend to support each other more appropriately than others, when identified with various levels of leadership (Fullan, 2011; Northouse, 2012; Shields, 2010; Spillane; 2001). Successful distributed leadership, in the middle school setting is ultimately, the sum of all the parts of the leadership team. These parts include the interplay of leveled-leadership, the theoretical frames guiding each team member's leadership style, and transformative vision shared by all team members (Christensen, Dyer, & Gregersen, 2011; Shields, 2010). The overall framework created by the multi-leveled leadership structure provides the lens through which this study can be viewed.

Assumptions

Teacher leadership is considered a relatively new concept, especially in locations outside of the United States (Harris, 2003; Helterbran, 2010). When using the term teacher leader, people are referring to their own perceptions of what a teacher who leads is and does, which is particular to geographic and cultural settings. Therefore, assumptions of the team leader role may exist that do not align with the particular role of the team leader role in the middle school setting. It may also be assumed that the team leaders are performing the same functions at each of the three middle schools participating in this study. The principals have the power to define the team leader job description within each of their schools. The job description for team leaders at the middle school level, district-wide is unclear.

Scope and Limitations

Though findings vary between the three schools, no middle school in the participating school district has been excluded from this investigation. This study cannot claim to encompass

new findings from teacher leaders or team leaders in any other district other than the participating district of the study. There are also other leadership positions that are held by teachers within the district participating in this study that could be explored in future studies to compare their perceptions of how their leadership positions influence distributed leadership models. These leadership positions include positions such as, curriculum facilitators or instructional coaches (Grenda, 2014).

Rationale and Significance

Teachers grow as learners when they are acting as a leader of their school (Barth, 2007). By better understanding team leader perceptions of their leadership role, as it influences the distributed leadership model, administrators can more thoughtfully and intentionally structure professional development opportunities for these teacher leaders. Providing teacher leaders with more meaningful professional development allows leaders to self-reflect or self-evaluate their leadership; thus, the leader becomes more open to self-improvement or change (Conger, 2006). Through gaining an understanding of team-leader perceptions of their positions' influence on distributed leadership processes researchers can gain a better understanding of particular strengths, or untapped potential for positive organizational change (Lukacs & Galluzzo, 2014).

Definition of Terms

Teacher Leader: Teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others towards improved educational practice (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001. p. 17).

Team leader: The leader has special responsibility for functioning in a manner that will help the group achieve effectiveness (Northouse, 2012, p. 290).

Perception: The processes that organize information in the sensory image and interpret it as

having been produced by properties of objects or events in the external, three-dimensional world (American Psychological Association, 2002).

Instructional Data Team (IDT): Grade level, cross-discipline team of teachers who meet to discuss data-driven action and progress of teachers and students towards meeting school goals (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2013)

School Data Team (SDT): Building-level teacher leaders (team leaders), who are responsible for meeting with school principals to discuss data-driven action and progress of teachers and students towards meeting school goals (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2013).

Distributed Leadership: Distributed leadership involves the sharing of influence by team members who step forward when situations warrant providing the leadership necessary and then stepping back to allow others to lead (Northouse, 2012, p. 289).

Conclusion

By identifying common factors between teacher leader perspectives of how their leadership position influences the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting this study will make available to school leaders and administrators information for growth and development centered on the needs of the team leaders to do their jobs most effectively. By better understanding the feelings a team leader has about their job role as a teacher leader school administrators can design more thoughtful professional development for these leaders and offer them distributed leadership opportunities that best align with each team leader's perceived strengths of him- or herself as a leader of their peers.

Chapter Two is a review of the literature, and will expand upon the need for teacher leadership teams and identifies the factors necessary for institutionalizing a successful distributed

leadership team. Chapter Three will provide the rationale for selecting an interpretive, qualitative methods approach to research. Chapter Four will explain the methods implemented by the researcher for data analysis and outlines the steps of the coding process, including the identification of significant themes and subthemes. Chapter Five will conclude this study by presenting interpretations of the significant themes as key findings, which help to answer the main research questions. The concluding chapter will ultimately provide the field of education with richer information on exactly how these participants perceive their leadership roles in terms of how their leadership position influences the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting. Newly identified information can then be used by school administrators to better design school leadership team models and provide more meaningful professional development for team leaders to truly unlock the potential of their leadership role.

Chapter Two: A Review of the Literature

The concept of teacher leaders working within a distributed leadership model has been studied in many countries and cultures. School reform has included teacher-teaming structures, inclusive of teacher leaders as a key component on an international scale (Main, 2012). Avidov-Ungar, Friedman, and Olshtain (2014) explored how the feeling of *empowerment* impacted teacher perceptions of their role as leaders within schools in Israel. Focus areas such as *empowerment* or *job satisfaction* are common elements studied with teacher leaders and their perceptions of how their leadership roles impact their schools (Avidov-Ungar, Friedman, & Olshtain, 2014; Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012).

Context of Teacher Leadership and Teacher Perceptions

Organizational development is a larger context area that applies to leadership structures within educational institutions. Specifically, *commitment* to an organization may increase when members of an organization become more involved in their organizations as leaders. There are many findings within the literature to suggest that a shared decision-making model of leadership impacts the commitment level a teacher leader has towards their school (Bogler & Somech, 2004; Grenda, 2014). Bogler and Somech, (2004) identified a two dimensional construct by stating that, “Decision-making in the school setting involves participation in decision-making in the technical domain (i.e., dealing with students and instruction), and in the managerial domain (i.e., dealing with school operations and administration)” (p. 4).

The way professionals feel about their contributions to their workplace may impact their overall perceptions of their organization, which is especially true within educational institutions where feelings of *commitment* and *empowerment* may impact teacher leader perceptions of the school leadership system (Aydin, Sarier, & Uysal, 2013; Mayer, Donaldson, LeChasseur,

Welton, & Cobb, 2013; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). Therefore, empowerment and commitment have been identified as two key variables within this study.

Teacher leadership is a relatively new term in the field of education (Helterbran, 2010). Varying definitions of *teacher leadership* exists within the literature as well as within various school districts and educational communities. For the purpose of this review, a teacher leader is defined as “teachers, who lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others towards improved educational practice” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001. p. 17). Teacher leaders are welcomed by administrators in an official capacity to assist in the decision making process. While teacher leadership has been given attention by many researchers, more research is needed to explore the *perceptions* of teachers on key components of teacher leadership within the school context (Angelle & DeHart, 2011).

Purpose Statement

This review of the literature investigates teacher leadership models and teacher leader perceptions of how their leadership position influences the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting.

Existing literature identified common themes related to teacher leadership and teacher perceptions of their involvement in the leadership of their school such as, trust, and job satisfaction. Various theoretical stances on leadership have also presented themselves throughout the literature, which support the existence of a school leadership model inclusive of teacher leaders. These theoretical stances are servant leadership, situational leadership and transformative leadership theories.

Distributed leadership involves the sharing of influence by team members who step forward when situations warrant providing the leadership necessary and then stepping back to allow others to lead. (Northouse, 2012, p. 289). This review explores teacher leader perceptions of how their leadership position influences the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting.

More empirical research is needed pertaining to middle school leadership, specifically (Gale & Bishop, 2014). The history of teacher leadership and the related forms of leadership theory are becoming more prevalent within current literature. The relationships formed when leaders in different capacities support each other may also be an avenue for learning more about teacher leader and administrator perspectives on distributed leadership models (Fullan, 2014).

The Literature Review Process

The literature review began with a self-motivated interest in teacher leadership and a desire to understand how teachers can become a larger, more effective element of positive change within their school communities, particularly within a distributed leadership model. ERIC and EBSCO Host have provided many academic, peer-reviewed articles supporting the researcher's topical interest. In seeking a stronger knowledge base of the literature, exploring many books on leadership theory has helped to enrich this study with connections to leadership theory pertaining to teacher leadership, particularly, situational, transformative and servant leadership (Fullan, 2014; Northouse, 2012). Consideration of multi-dimensional leadership strategies and locating key trends in the literature has allowed for the selection of certain descriptors for searching the journal databases such as, *task-oriented leadership styles, distributed leadership, and shared leadership strategies*.

Reference sections of articles and works that connect more precisely with the purpose of this study, in particular *teacher leadership models in the middle school setting*, and *teacher perceptions of how their leadership position influences the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting*, have been used as information trails; thus, have provided new routes for rich information. Other key descriptors have emerged as follows: *teacher leadership, teacher and administrative collaboration, (teacher) commitment, empowerment (of teachers), shared leadership, and distributed leadership*.

The Teacher Leadership Model

There is debate within literature as to whether or not the term *teacher leader* is an official term within the culture of education (Helterbran, 2010). The teaching profession is unique when analyzed under the microscope of professional evolution. That is, teachers, over time, gain expertise in their profession yet they do not move up in terms of positional advancement. Once a teacher becomes comfortable in their role of teaching they may seek new challenges beyond the teaching role itself. Teachers have taken on responsibilities beyond instruction in the classroom yet are still perceived, professionally the same way they were years ago when instruction was the sole responsibility (Danielson, 2006).

Identifying the Teacher Leader

Teacher leadership can be thought of as a non-authoritative, unofficial or official role that teachers fulfill in order to create positive change within their educational community. Literature describes *teacher leaders* as those who willingly adopt responsibilities as members of their educational community beyond the role of classroom instructor for the purpose of having a positive impact on that community. Formal leadership within schools does not only occur within the administrative level; teacher leadership is particularly evident within the middle school

setting where academic teams are often grouped in a cross-curricular-teacher structure (Grenda, 2014). Teacher practice and professional goals may be linked to teacher leadership and the influence on the overall school climate (Harris & Muijs, 2004). Teacher qualifications often determine whether or not a teacher can be or is perceived as a leader within their school community. Curriculum leaders, team leaders and other designated leadership roles can also be considered official leadership positions (Grenda, 2014). Many teachers who lead do not perceive themselves to be official leaders as they may only associate the concept of school leadership with high-level administrative roles (Angelle, & DeHart, 2011). A lack of recognition as a leader may add to the research gap on the topic of teacher perceptions of teacher-specific leadership roles and connect to how the teacher leaders perceive their role influences the leadership process within their school.

It is important to consider teachers who may be beneficial to a school as a leader yet do not know how or have not had the opportunity to become a recognized leader. Specific roles or positions associated with teachers that have responsibilities which extend beyond teaching are important to consider. One example of a particular position noted within the literature is that of the new teacher. Newer teachers, for instance may be more likely to adjust and adopt the current role of teacher leader than a teacher who has been teaching for many years. New teachers are an essential component of a school environment and may themselves become teacher leaders, in the form of teacher leaders at an earlier point in their career than previously (historically) possible (Flores, 2004). To help bring the new teachers into the leadership community many schools have implemented a mentorship program. The mentor position itself is an example of a teacher leader. Some systems have an official mentorship program while many of these relationships just occur naturally and unofficially within the school environment.

A teacher who is particularly skilled in a certain area may provide a useful skill or tool that can be used to better the leadership processes within that school. A teacher who is skilled at using a new computer system may be asked to run a workshop for other teachers. Being the one to provide professional development for colleagues would place that teacher into the category of teacher leader. A teacher who is very aware of the emotional needs of their students and therefore has created an obviously safe and supportive environment for their students may ultimately increase the achievement scores of those students. Teachers who prove to be particularly sensitive to the emotional needs of students may become a member of the school's social emotional leadership team or be asked to help teachers who need improvement in the area of creating such an environment within their own classroom. Social emotional learning not only benefits the students but also the teachers and the climate of the school in general (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012). Skills teachers possess to better equip them for positive workplace experiences are similar to the skills necessary for leaders to possess.

Transformative and Transformational Approaches

Aydin, Sarier & Uysal (2013) stated that, "As the transformational leadership behavior of school principals increases, teachers' organizational commitment increases" (p. 808). Therefore, a transformative model would be a nice fit for any administrator who chooses to encourage involvement of all teaching staff in the main functions of the school.

Middle schools have various formal leadership levels. Transformational leadership structures encourage more involvement from all members within the various levels of the organization. Like transformative leadership, it is likely that school districts adopting a transformational approach may have a stronger presence of teacher leadership. In the middle school setting, regardless of the leadership structure, teachers often work in teams or groups.

When creating groups, Main (2012) suggested, “the effects of the relationship processes must also be factored in” (p. 78).

Many school systems consider administrators to be the only official leaders within the educational organization, with principals located at the top of the power pyramid and teachers placed somewhere in the middle. An effective principal must be committed and connected to the organization. Christensen, Dyer and Gregersen (2011) suggested that leaders create organizational processes that support personal behaviors of the leader. By creating a leadership process conducive to one’s personal leadership behaviors, the principal becomes more deeply connected with their organization. The role of the principal used to be the lead teacher, hence *principal* educator. Over time, the capacity of the principal has evolved. The change in the role of the principal is an indicator that the role of the teacher is a natural next step for change as well. Demands on school administrators have become greater (Petzko, Clark, Valentine, Hackmann, & Lucas, 2002). Alone, a principal cannot be as effective as they could be by enlisting others in their efforts to lead a school. Administrators need to recognize teacher leaders as formal leaders by enlisting them in the change process.

Enlisting Others

To enlist others the leader is a purposeful listener and acts to weave the dreams of the team member into the overall vision or goal of the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). Leaders should also lead with a sense of moral purpose (Fullan, 2001). The literature suggests that though schools with multiple levels of leadership need to work as a cohesive unit, each member’s role should be well-defined and leaders should act intentionally and purposefully when guiding others (Fullan, 2001; Parker, 2006).

Distributed Leadership

In a distributive leadership model, the creation of ideas and the implementation of change initiatives are taken on by many members of an organization. Sharing the power within an organization, in particular a middle school setting allows teachers to play a role in the change process. Distributed teacher leadership models foster innovative thinking and promotes creativity (Creanor, 2014). Still relevant in the current literature is Spillane, Halverson and Diamond's (2001) task-oriented perspective on distributed leadership, which allows a leader to focus on the tasks themselves as opposed to the roles of participants (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). By taking the focus off of the individuals, task-oriented approaches to distributive leadership models allow new possibilities to present themselves (Creanor, 2014; Gronn, 2000). A principal who implements a model inclusive of shared teacher leadership would likely consider which staff member can accomplish a specific task, and which leader may change with each new task. Situational leaders best support leadership models that demonstrate flexibility. Situational leaders can easily adjust to meet the needs of their staff or school with changes that may arise (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). It is often assumed by leaders that adults will automatically know how to take on new positions and do what is expected. Hersey and Blanchard (1977) implied that if the group were not ready to work so independently without specific direction, then they would not succeed with their tasks. The principal needs to find the right balance of being authentic and being emotionally supportive of the group members and their needs. In other words, a good principal might be someone who is skilled at reading the needs of others and acting accordingly as opposed to implementing hard-fast rules regardless of situational elements. Current literature suggests that situational leadership models must be examined as a two-dimensional. Northouse (2012) identified the supportive and directive needs of each interaction

pertaining to a situational approach to leadership. Therefore, the actions of the leader (principal) and the teacher leaders need to be considered as an ongoing interactive relationship.

Effective Teams

To gain the support of teacher leaders and truly become a shared-leadership team between administration and teacher the principal will need to move beyond what Hersey and Blanchard (1977) referred to as *step one*, which is basically telling others what to do. Building effective teams must be done purposefully and thoughtfully. Curry (2014) suggested that building effective teams does not just happen, “organically” (p. 31). Team development takes time and finesse coupled with protocols and norms of functionality. Teachers and administrators should understand their exact roles and responsibilities in terms of carrying out leadership actions. In an effective team every member has a purpose, which is connected to the vision of the team (Parker, 2006). Purposeful leadership is essential to connecting the members of the leadership team to the goals of the organization.

Teacher Leadership Theories

Current leadership theory applies to the educational community as well. Three main leadership theories were evident within the current literature. The first of which is situational leadership theory, the second is servant leadership theory, and the third is transformative leadership theory. Situational and transformative leadership seem to be the most popular approach in the field of education both by formal leaders and by members of the teaching community. The difference between the three main theories is the purpose. Servant leadership implies that the teacher leaders become leaders to serve those around them, mainly the needs of the students and other staff members. They do so because they believe that by their doing good for others that the larger educational community will become a more positive place.

Transformative leadership encourages the betterment of the educational community but bases decisions on ethical, moral ground. A social impact is the goal of the teacher leader who enacts transformative change. Situational leadership requires a leader to be more flexible in their leadership techniques. The leader would have to consider each member of their organization and each situation in order to decide how to act. All three theories differ from the leadership methods present in a hierarchical system. Key elements of each include shared leadership with multiple positions within an organization, attention to morality and ethics and a need to make sure all members of a group are taken care of. Success for all members is key. Responsibility is shared, as is decision-making often a group process (Grenda, 2014). A common theme between the three main types of leadership identified within the literature is that the teacher-leader does not seek a specific authoritative role beyond their position of teacher. As one who does not seek authoritative leadership roles the teacher leader sees their purpose as bettering the school climate as a whole. Teachers who are more satisfied with the condition of their current workplace may be more willing to participate in a leadership role (Zullig, Huebner, & Patton, 2011).

Situational Leadership Theory

Leaders who enact a situational leadership model focus more on behaviors than on production (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982). Identifying what a particular person or situation needs and designing the leader's actions around that is the basis of situational leadership. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) suggest that leaders delegate tasks to other people so the leader can focus on being emotionally or instructionally supportive only when needed. Blake and Mouton (1981) compared a Managerial Grid approach to leadership with Situationalism. The Grid focuses more on the attitudes of the leaders towards production and individuals while Situationalism focuses on the behaviors associated with leadership actions (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982). Situational

leadership also allows a leader to become more or less involved in tasks on a micro or macro level as situations arise. A situational leadership style is highly conducive to a teacher leadership model within a middle school setting. The flexibility demonstrated by situational leadership is further supported by school structures that fully enact a shared-leadership model or a distributed leadership perspective. Similar to situational leadership, in a distributive leadership model the leader may need to change their level of support or style of support often especially when focusing on the enactment of tasks (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Sharing tasks also means sharing power and helps all members of a leadership team to be less intimidated by the power one leader possesses on their own (Northouse, 2012).

Transformative Leadership Theory

Transformative leadership theory suggests that leaders encourage members of an organization to share responsibility in decision-making. There may be a link to the concept of teacher leadership as current pedagogy practice aligns directly with transformative leadership techniques (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011). Teachers often go beyond the role of educating to adopt and implement school-wide policies within their classroom in order to improve student-teacher relationships (Barile, et al., 2012).

The concept of emotional intelligence is also addressed within the literature, which is a necessary component of teacher leadership and administration that appears in transformative leadership environments (Hoffman, Hutchinson, & Reiss, 2009). Leadership, no matter the type of structure within an educational organization, should affect the learners' experience either directly or indirectly. The overall goals of a transformative leadership approach seem to directly align with those of today's changing educational system. With a strong base in social, ethical decision-making, transformative leadership theory supports the current common initiatives

within American public schools. Relationships and relationship building is another theme within transformative leadership that is essential within public school systems (Wilson, 2004). When considering the dynamics of a learning environment a researcher may identify what factors influence that environment.

Examining the relationships between the members of any organizational community is essential in order to understand the attitudes directed towards that community. One key relationship in schools today is that of the various stakeholders within the educational community. Parents, administrators, teachers and students comprise the main groups of stakeholders. Whenever the responsibilities of any of these groups change the impact may also be a changed set of responsibilities on another group, which would ultimately impact the school climate. For instance, if parents request that administrators make more and more changes to the school structure then the administrators may need to engage teachers in the enactment of those changes, as one principal cannot be the only correspondent to all of the parents of students within a school. Leaders with a transformative approach believe it is more productive to allow group members to become involved in nearly all aspects of the organization.

Servant Leadership Theory

Servant leadership theory within the school environment suggests that teachers take on the leadership roles in an effort to serve others for the purpose of the greater good. According to Fullan, (2001) leaders should lead with a sense of moral purpose by doing what they believe is right for those whom they serve. Fullan (2001) suggested that leading with a sense of moral purpose is a quality of good leadership. Servant leadership calls for teachers to act as leaders without expecting any reward or recognition in return. As part of servant leadership theory, the role of the teacher is not intended to extend into the realm of administration. The teachers strive

to impact their school beyond simple classroom instruction yet do not hope or desire to move into administration. Issues they concern themselves with involve constantly working to improve perceptions of the school culture, academic achievement, promoting a deeper level of meaningful education, mindful planning to lower the achievement gap and restructuring instructional methods based on data-driven decision making (Danielson, 2006). Ultimately, all students and their academic achievement, or success, is the primary focus of schools (Fullan, 2014). Therefore, all leaders of the school should work towards a goal for student success.

Black (2010) used a mixed-methods approach to investigate how servant leadership and school climate are connected. Empirical data was collected and analyzed to identify leadership styles and school climate types. Correlations between these leadership styles and various types of climates were made. Leadership style is a major factor when it comes to the condition of the school's climate. Within the framework of servant leadership there are also many negative effects on the educational community. The word *servant* often has a negative feeling as it implies one person has power over another. There are varying perspectives on the word servant and therefore the corresponding theory, servant leadership theory, as well. Teachers in certain religious-based schools may be more likely to accept a servant leadership model, as servitude is a respected aspect of their belief system (Black, 2010).

Impact of the Teacher Leadership Model on School Leadership

A study by DeAngelis and Presley (2011) revealed a connection of teacher qualification to student achievement to school climate. When a member of an organization plays a large role in the construct of that organization they often have a more critical perspective of the climate. Teachers who see their role as leaders to be interwoven with their role as educators may perceive their school climate as positive (Harris, & Muijs, 2004). When each member of the

leadership team has a specific function and understands their responsibilities the team will become more effective (Parker, 2006). An effective team will have a greater, more positive impact on the whole organization or school community, specifically the school leadership team.

In an effective team every member has a purpose, which is connected to the vision of the team (Parker, 2006). Leaders should listen to others and build a situation where members can see exactly where their own needs are met by their participation in the plans of the organization. In other words, there needs to be a personal connection between each teacher leader and the goals or tasks at hand. By listening to individuals, leaders can help define what Kouzes and Posner (2006) described as common values. When schools implement a teacher leadership model successfully, listening and involving the teacher leaders in the creation, adoption and enactment of these common values is essential.

Kelley, Thornton, and Daugherty (2005) suggested a connection between teachers' perceptions of their leaders' effectiveness and their perceptions of the condition of the school's climate. Shared leadership allows more people to have access to information and be involved in the change process (Lummis & The Center for Collaborative Education, 2001).

Benefits of Institutionalizing a Distributed Leadership Model

Middle schools may be the perfect place for enacting a teacher leadership model as many of them choose to implement cross discipline teams of teachers with one teacher designated as the team leader (Grenda, 2014). Therefore, the bones of the teacher leadership model are already strong within the framework of the middle school environment, which means that shared decision making from varying teacher positions, with one team representative, is a common structure. Grenda (2014) suggested, "The degree of teacher involvement in the decision-making process may be directly related to the level of impact of the issue on the school and its faculty"

(p. 63). When shared decisions are made each member of the team may feel more included in the ever-changing environment of the middle school community.

Teacher leaders can be thought of as representatives for the other teachers within the school as well. Reaching a level where *common values* are adopted and supported may be more successful in a middle school that institutionalizes the teacher leader model as each teacher is a leader or is represented directly by a leader. A representative structure promotes the representation of all teachers and whole-school communication, making it more likely to clarify for each teacher how their individual dreams connect to the overall vision of the school (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). Communication is a key component to institutionalizing a successful distributed leadership model, inclusive of teacher leaders (Ediger, 2014; Fullan, 2014). By creating a climate where teacher leaders feel empowered and more committed to the change efforts of the schools, organizational-collaborative processes will become more successful and the teacher leader model will become a staple of the middle school design (Aydin, Sarier, & Uysal, 2013; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979).

School systems are unique organizations. The students are cherished, young members of the local community. Implementing teacher leadership structures, which are specific to each school, helps leaders to focus on the needs of that school community and allows the leadership efforts to target *local* issues; as opposed to change efforts being mandated solely from external powers (Smylie & Denny, 1990). By focusing on change within the institution as well as the needs of the larger community, transformative leadership theory is supported.

Mutual Support between Principal and Teacher Leaders

The principal is a key leader at the middle school level. Divergent stakeholder demands, long working hours, great responsibility and high expectations are intense for a principal

(Petzko, Clark, Valentine, Hackmann, & Lucas, 2002). A principal who chooses to support a teacher leadership model must be willing to share the decision making process and distribute responsibility. Principals supportive of teacher leadership will likely free themselves up to focus on their own tasks as others take on more of the leadership burden. A positive outcome of being willing to share the leadership is that the enlisted leaders, in the case the teacher leaders, will likely feel empowered themselves and become more committed to positive change and support for the principal.

An example of a major issue plaguing principals today is the challenge of supporting teachers individually when it comes to evaluations and professional or pedagogical guidance. In fact, the biggest challenge for principals in helping their teachers to improve practice is simply not having enough time to do so (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013). Of course, no one person has enough time to work with an entire staff for specific improvements. Yet, it is the responsibility of the principal to ensure professional learning opportunities are available for teachers to grow (Fullan, 1993). Professional development and opportunities for teacher learning is an essential component of a school's culture. Therefore, enacting opportunities for teacher leadership provides the principal with a team of leaders to assist with many tasks.

A teacher leadership model supports a principal in their position as the building-level leader. One specific task is to allow teacher leaders to support other teachers to improve their own practice through observations and feedback (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013). A peer observation system would provide the overall staff more support while taking some responsibility away from the principal. Another area of concern is that many middle school principals do not have teaching experience specifically at the middle school level (Petzko, Clark, Valentine, Hackmann, & Lucas, 2002). Teachers may not feel comfortable with a leader who does not demonstrate

expertise similar to theirs or beyond. Implementing a teacher leadership team would ensure that expertise from multiple areas are present within the leadership structure of the school. A good leader, more specifically, a good principal uses positive communication techniques, is clear in intention and invites teachers to participate in the decision making of the school. By being a clear communicator the leader will create a more trusting environment, where expectations are more likely to be understood by all members (Fullan, 2014).

As the principal is the ultimate school leader trying to constantly improve all aspects of the school, inviting teacher leaders to assist in the leadership process could strengthen change efforts and produce more favorable results. Research suggests that leaders who demonstrate more positivity may influence followers to become more creative (Avey, Richmond, & Nixon, 2012). Within a distributed model, the leader can be the principal or the teacher leaders. Therefore, who the followers are at a certain time can change depending upon the situation at hand. At times, teachers will lead other teachers or administrators will be leading teachers. Creativity, as well as a shift to a task-oriented approach to organizational processes, may open the doors to new solutions to problems and challenges (Avey, Richmond, & Nixon, 2012; Creanor, 2014; Gronn, 2000; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001).

Conceptual Framework

The literature provides a wealth of information that shows relationships between teacher leadership models and distributed leadership models. Distributed leadership models are often task-oriented and allow for creativity or new ideas to emerge for organizational change (Avey, Richmond, & Nixon, 2012; Creanor, 2014; Gronn, 2000; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). In the perpetually changing realm of public education within the United States, administrators have found it beneficial to include teachers within the leadership process (Avidov-

Ungar, Friedman & Olshtain, 2014; Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013; Barth, 2007; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001; Spillane, 2006). Leadership tasks that teachers are asked to participate with include general or specific decision-making, peer evaluations and peer observations (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013; Grenda, 2014). While many findings indicate measures of success in these specific areas of distributed models which include teacher leaders, information is lacking that stems from the teacher leader perspectives themselves.

There are certain types of leadership theory presented within the literature which are supportive of a distributed leadership model that includes teacher leadership as an official element. For instance, the principal must be a leader who supports the involvement of others with leadership tasks in order to effectively lead the team (Fullan, 2014). Enacting teacher leaders' participation in the leadership of a middle school system creates a leveled leadership team. A high level of involvement instills a sense of commitment and a group desire to transform the school in a positive way (Shields, 2010). In order to accomplish positive transformation a more accurate understanding of how these leaders perceive their positional influence on the distributed leadership processes within the middle school setting is needed. Therefore, this study explores the relationships of the team leaders with their administrators and other teachers through the lens of their self-perspective with a particular focus on the sense of empowerment created by their leadership role (Aydin, Sarier, & Uysal, 2013; Mayer, Donaldson, LeChasseur, Welton, & Cobb, 2013; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979).

Conclusion

The topic of distributed leadership models within schools alone is informed by immeasurable studies. The focus here was on relevant literature for the middle school setting. There are many correlational studies and scholarly works, which aim to define distributed

leadership and measure the efficiency of distributed leadership models by focusing on elements such as task completion and shared responsibility. Grenda (2014) suggested that complexities in today's school leadership processes have made it so, "effectiveness and collaboration have become synonymous in educational discussions" (p. 63).

Middle schools are already likely to include a teacher-teaming model (Grenda, 2014). In these situations where the principal is supportive of involving teachers in the leadership processes collaboration is essential. Collaboration is often the key element in unification efforts between various stakeholder groups (Gale & Bishop, 2014). To improve the collaborative process an environment where each member understands his or her individual role is beneficial and may lead to increased productivity (Parker, 2006). It is also useful if each member can see just how their own needs are met by the larger goals of the school (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). A principal or leader who enacts situational leadership strategies and a distributed leadership model will be able to share leadership responsibilities with others and focus on more specific supportive tasks when and where they are needed (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982).

It has become clear through the literature review process that the common themes of school leadership models that include the teacher leader structure are: positive communication, positive feelings of the teacher leaders towards their own role as a leader, trust between key players and teacher leaders' perceptions of how their leadership role influences the leadership process within their school. Teachers who enact the leadership role without seeking authoritative positions, administrative roles or professional shifts beyond the classroom often do so selflessly, which often impacts their own perceptions of their positional influence within a distributed leadership model as well as the perceptions of the teachers who choose not to take on leadership positions. The perceptions of teacher leaders in relation to specific components of their

leadership positions, for instance their perceptions of their impact on the distributed leadership processes, have not been deeply explored within the literature (Angelle & DeHart, 2011), which allows for further exploration and discovery. Therefore, teacher leader perceptions of their influence on the distributed leadership process are the focus area for this study.

The responsibilities of the teaching profession have been evolving rapidly, especially during the last decade, yet the role of teacher as leader has remained largely unrecognized within the field of education. It is embedded implicitly within the role of an educator to desire a positive effect on the learning experiences of their students. Therefore, teacher leadership strongly reflects the ambition to promote student success. Institutions that embrace a transformative leadership approach seem to have more success with teacher leaders within their schools. Specifically, leaders who are more flexible with their leadership style, such as a situational leader, may be better equipped to support the needs of a teacher leadership team. It seems that there is a direct correlation between teacher leaders and the type of leadership style that exists within the school administration.

An area for further exploration would be to delve deeper into the three main leadership theories, Situational Leadership Theory, Transformative Leadership Theory and Servant Leadership Theory, to identify which types of leadership style exist most often within teacher leadership roles. Teacher leadership is a concept that has re-entered the education world in a time of continuous educational change.

Teacher and administrator perceptions of what actually makes a successful leadership team are essential in consideration of developing a successful distributed leadership model. Within the literature, it seems that a principal who welcomes a distributive leadership model will encourage the development of an effective team where each member feels connected and

committed to the school. Functioning together the teacher leaders and the administrators can enact transformative leadership strategies to really grow as an educational community.

A common theme within the literature is the appearance of the need for a more unified study of leadership interaction in an educational setting. Neumerski (2013) referred to the existing body of literature as, “compartmentalized” (p. 314). Leaders supporting leaders is one aspect of instructional leadership that can be enriched by further study. Various levels or types of leaders within a particular educational community can have an enormous impact on the school’s leadership processes. Therefore, teachers of all leadership levels and roles, building level administrators, district level administrators and even state to national policy makers should understand the potential for successful, meaningful, positive change in the middle school setting with the institutionalization of teacher leadership teams as a key component of a distributed leadership team.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This qualitative study explores teacher leader perceptions of how their leadership position influences the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting. The perspective of the teacher leaders is the central phenomenon needing further exploration, as limited information exists within the literature from the perspectives of the teacher leaders themselves (Angelle & DeHart, 2011). This is an interpretive qualitative study as it seeks to derive meaning from how the teacher leaders interpret their experiences as members within a middle school distributed leadership team (Merriam, 2009).

Participants were chosen due to their official teacher leader position within their school. This particular teacher leadership position is known as the *team leader*. Interviews were conducted to explore team leader perceptions of how their leadership role influences the distributed leadership model within the middle school setting where they teach and lead. To begin interviews survey questions were asked to collect demographic information, such as gender, age range, number of years teaching, number of years in this district, subject taught, grade level they lead, and number of members on their team. Interview questions followed the demographic questions and focused primarily on experiential story telling directly linked to the following three main research questions:

1. In what ways might team leaders feel differently about their school's leadership processes since they have become an official leader within their school's organizational structure?
2. What workplace experiences have been significant in terms of shaping the team leaders' perceptions of the distributed leadership process within their school setting?
3. How does being in a position of leadership impact the team leaders' feelings towards interactions with other teachers who are not in an official position of leadership?

Study Setting

Middle schools are the ideal setting for an exploration seeking to learn more about teacher leader perceptions of how their leadership position influences the distributed leadership process because the typical middle school structure tends to follow a group or team design with one designated teacher as the leader (Grenda, 2014).

The middle schools participating in this study are located in an upper-class community in Southwestern Connecticut. This school district has three middle schools. Demographics for this school district are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1

School District Demographic Information	
Enrollment (October 2014)	8,803
Average Elementary Class Size	19.6
% Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch	14.6%
% Students Not Fluent in English:	5.4%
% Attended Preschool:	94.5%
% Minority Population:	31.9%

*Demographics above indicate the data for the 2014-15, school year. **

Team leaders were invited for interviews from each of the three middle schools. Participants were asked questions which sought to gain a better understanding of the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting. The researcher attended a middle school principals' network meeting to formally present the study plan and ask permission to work with the team leaders. All three principals provided a written letter of consent for research to take

place in their school buildings with their teacher leadership team. Individual interviews were then arranged to take place either in person or over the phone.

Participants

By interviewing team leaders from all middle schools within this district the researcher was able to collect a body of data, which is representative of the whole district, as no middle school within this setting has been excluded. The researcher works within one of the middle schools as a teacher and as a learning facilitator. The learning facilitator position is also a recognized teacher leader position. To prevent bias from affecting the focus group process teachers who are learning facilitators were not invited as participants. Therefore, only teachers who are team leaders were asked to participate in these interviews. Schools A, B and C have between five and six team leaders each. By including groups of team leaders from three different schools within this study the researcher gained insight on district-wide perceptions of how team leaders feel their leadership position influences the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting.

Data Collection

Prior to interviews team leaders from each middle school were formally invited to participate in the form of a written letter. Permission was asked of all participants for interviews to be voice recorded. Participants were notified within the official University of New England consent form that recordings are used strictly for the purposes of this study. Interview questions began with light, welcoming descriptive intentions to gain some background information on the teacher leader's roles and responsibilities within their particular middle school. Team leaders were then asked experiential questions related to their teacher leader role responsibilities and

functions. As stated earlier in this chapter, the interview questions were directly linked to support the main research questions associated with this study.

A focus area within the experiential questions was on the teacher leader interactions with other levels of leadership, from administration to new teachers, when performing a distributed leadership task. An example of a distributed leadership task is decision-making, whereas the results of the decision will directly or indirectly affect all teachers within the school. School leadership models, which support the involvement of teacher leaders with leadership tasks such as decision-making, are often referred to as a distributed leadership model (Grenda, 2014). In a successful distributed leadership model the principal should act to empower the teacher leaders by inviting them to participate in the decision-making process (Devos, Tuytens, & Hulpia, 2014).

Individual interviews were used as the main method for data collection for this study. Within the one on one setting, participants shared more personal feelings towards their leadership role, perhaps allowing the researcher to gather more personal information on individual experiences and thoughts pertaining to the team leader perspectives of how their leadership role influences the distributed leadership model within the middle school setting.

Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed using an online transcription company: Transcription hub: Service on the cloud (2015). Content from these transcriptions was then entered into NVivo, a computer coding system and used to identify themes, which emerged to more clearly articulate and represent teacher leader perceptions of how their leadership position influences the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting. Care was taken to focus on the phenomenon of the study, which were the perceptions of the team leaders, as their voice is lacking within the current realm of information on teacher leadership and distributed leadership

literature. The researcher conducted first and second cycle rounds of coding in order to extract meaning from the transcribed text and identify significant themes, which assisted the researcher in answering the main research questions. Chapter four will detail more fully these themes representing common perspectives held by the team leaders towards their leadership role. Themes were developed with consideration of the goal of this study; which is to understand the perceptions of how teachers' leadership position influences the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting.

Participant Rights

Team leaders within each of the three middle schools received an introductory letter, which introduced the researcher, the importance of the study and the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2012). The letter served as the formal invitation for team leaders to participate in the interview process. Participants were also presented with a consent form for participation, which aligns directly with the guidelines set forth by the University of New England. The consent form informed participants that their involvement with this study was strictly voluntary. Contact information for the researcher and the university advisor were provided on the consent form.

Participants were informed within the letter and within the consent form that their names would not be used anywhere within the written documentation of this study. Their identity associated with their responses to the interview questions would not be revealed before, during or after the study was conducted. The researcher provided participants with a clear letter of invitation, which presented the benefits of participation. Description of benefits included an explanation of the need for teacher leaders' voice in the field of educational leadership (Grenda, 2014).

Study Limitations

Some participants were more familiar with the researcher, as the researcher is a teacher leader, serving in a role outside of the team leader position, at one of the three participating schools. Other team leaders were unfamiliar with the researcher, not having worked with her in any professional capacity prior to the interview process.

To avoid possible low-survey-return-rates the researcher chose to ask the demographic survey questions at the start of each interview (Creswell, 2012). Individual interviews contained specific experiential questions relevant to the individual teacher leader's feelings of influence on their school's distributed leadership process. Chapter four will provide a detailed explanation of the data analysis process and a description of the analysis methods implemented by the researcher. Chapter four will also include a presentation of the results and the significant themes identified during the analysis process.

Chapter Four: Analysis

The purpose of this study is to examine how team leaders feel their teacher leadership positions influence the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting. This chapter explains the researcher's methods of organizing the raw data collected from surveying and interviewing 15 teacher leaders, referred to as "team leaders." Interviews explored the team leaders' perspectives of how their role influences the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting. The interview sessions consisted of the researcher asking participants for preliminary demographic information followed by ten interview questions intended to explore teacher leader perspectives of how their leadership role influences the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting (Appendix B). There are 16 team leaders at the middle school level within this school district. A total of 15 team leaders participated in this study, with only one member declining participation due to a busy schedule. Interviews lasted between 18 and 45 minutes.

This chapter provides an explanation of the methods for data analysis implemented by the researcher and presents the results of the study along with the researcher's findings. In order to interpret significance from the transcribed text two rounds of coding were conducted. The first cycle of coding allowed the researcher to organize and code the raw data using a simultaneous coding process, where both NVivo and descriptive coding processes have been implemented to extract significance from larger bodies of text (Saldaña, 2013). The researcher then carefully revisited the data from first round coding to search for trends or patterns, which is referred to as second cycle coding (Saldaña, 2013). The researcher's method of second cycle coding included the identification of subcategories, which were combined to develop five major themes. The essential patterns developed during the coding cycles, otherwise known as categories or themes,

and assisted the researcher in answering the main research questions of this study.

Analysis Method

To organize the raw data for the coding process, all 15 interview sessions were recorded with written permission granted by each participant and transcribed into a total of 107 pages of text. The transcriptions were imported into the NVivo software program. Each transcript was linked to participants using a numerical identifier, associating each person with each of the following demographic elements: age group, school location, number of years teaching, number of years teaching in this district, number of years acting as team leader, subject and grade level teaching and leading, and the number of teachers on the team they lead. These demographics were then associated with responses to identify connections with subthemes, and ultimately the five significant themes identified during the analysis process.

First cycle coding began with the careful reading of each transcript while simultaneously listening to the audio recording of each interview session. Significant areas of text were highlighted and codes were created to extract and organize significant responses of each participant in connection to the main research questions. These smaller segments of chosen text could be coded as stated by the participant, known as in-vivo coding or symbolic representations of the overall meaning of the larger text, known as descriptive coding. As the researcher used multiple styles of coding throughout the data analysis process, this study implements a process known as *simultaneous coding* (Saldaña, 2013). Cognitive and emotional information within the text was considered significant content for this perceptions-based study (Lofland, Snow & Lofland, 2006, as cited in Saldaña, 2013). The analysis process was made easier by the alignment of each interview question to a particular research question. Though information

helping to answer each research question appeared throughout the interview process in responses to various other interview questions.

First cycle coding resulted in 338 references within the transcribed text. From these codes the researcher began to analyze the chosen text within each to identify patterns or overarching concepts that appeared in multiple transcriptions and code groups. The transcriptions were read through carefully, countless times until the researcher felt the essence of each response was summarized within an identified code. NVivo software allowed the researcher to select coded text and narrow or broaden its context, as needed for interpretation and selection purposes.

The second cycle of coding allowed the researcher to read through the coded text from the first cycle coding process to further identify more specific information for interpretation based on emergent trends or patterns within the text. Like-concept codes were grouped together into a larger container (parent-node) for the purpose of interpreting a larger meaning as a whole, which is known as focused coding (Saldaña, 2013). Once patterns began to emerge the researcher created parent and child code relationships between the larger themes and the coded content from which these themes surfaced. Within the NVivo software system the information moved from a code (node) to a larger container (top-level node) and was then aggregated to display all data within a hierarchical arrangement. NVivo allowed the researcher to view the content supporting each theme in smaller folders, further distinguishing them into smaller categories. Coding stripes, viewable on the side of the coded-text allowed the researcher to be aware of cross-category data during the analysis process. The researcher also developed a graph displaying the sources and references for each code, which helped to visualize the patterns and trends within the data. The following section of this chapter presents the results from the focused coding cycle in more detail.

Presentation of Results

The presentation of results begins with a description of the participants' demographic information. The analysis process is then explained in detail and significant themes are identified. Evidence is presented in the form of participant comments, which support the researcher's identification and explanation of each significant theme.

Participants' Demographic Information

Participants consisted of 11 female team leaders and four male team leaders. Participants ranged in age from mid-twenties to mid-sixties, with an average age of the team leader of 39. Five team leaders have less than ten years teaching experience. Five participants had between 10 and 20 years of teaching experience. Three participants had between 20 and 30 years of teaching experience. Lastly, two participants had over 30 years of teaching experience. Ten participants have been holding the team leader position between four months and five years. The remaining five participants have been holding the team leader position between six and ten years. The team leaders consist of a variety of subject teachers. There is one science teacher, four math teachers, three English or writing teachers, three social studies teachers, two special education teachers, and one seminar instructor, who is a full time teacher as well, and one French teacher. Team sizes range between five and 16 members, with the larger teams consisting of extracurricular subject teachers as well as the core subjects.

Identifying the Significant Themes

The researcher identified patterns within the codes by noting repetitive codes due to frequency (appearing in multiple texts), noting similar responses, made by multiple participants and noting contradictory responses to the same topic made by participants (Hatch, 2002, as cited in Saldaña, 2013) (Table 2). In other words, subthemes were placed into groups based on similar

categorization. The titles for these categories became the five significant themes within this study: Leadership Style, Empowerment, Social Influence, Commitment and Job Role Confusion.

Table 2

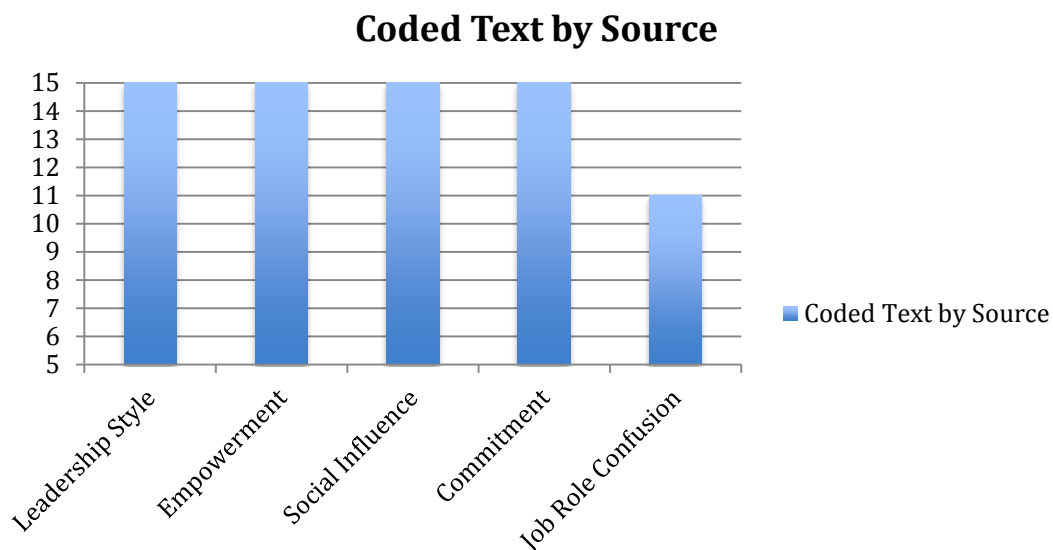
Themes Presented within the Coding Process	
Significant Themes	Subthemes
Leadership Style	The Authoritative or Assertive Team Leader The Reflective Team Leader Team Leader as Task Facilitator Team Leader as Representative of the Team
Empowerment	Recruitment Decision-making Information Sharing
Social Influence	Collaboration with Other Team Leaders Support from Administrators Dealing with Conflict Team Leader as Liaison
Commitment	Time Obligation Compensation Professional Development
Job Role Confusion	Unclear Expectations of Responsibility Unclear Level of Authority

**Significant patterns within the coding process have developed into the above themes.*

To explore the frequency of categories or themes the researcher examined the number of sources in which each theme appeared within the coded text. Figure 2 demonstrates the relationship between the coded text and the corresponding number of sources per identified theme. Leadership style was a focus area within all 15 of the source texts. Empowerment was a focus area within all 15 of the source texts. Social influence was a focus area within all 15 of the source texts. Commitment was a focus area within all 15 of the source texts. Lastly, Job Role Confusion was a focus area within 11 of the source texts.

Figure 2

Themes Presented within Sources

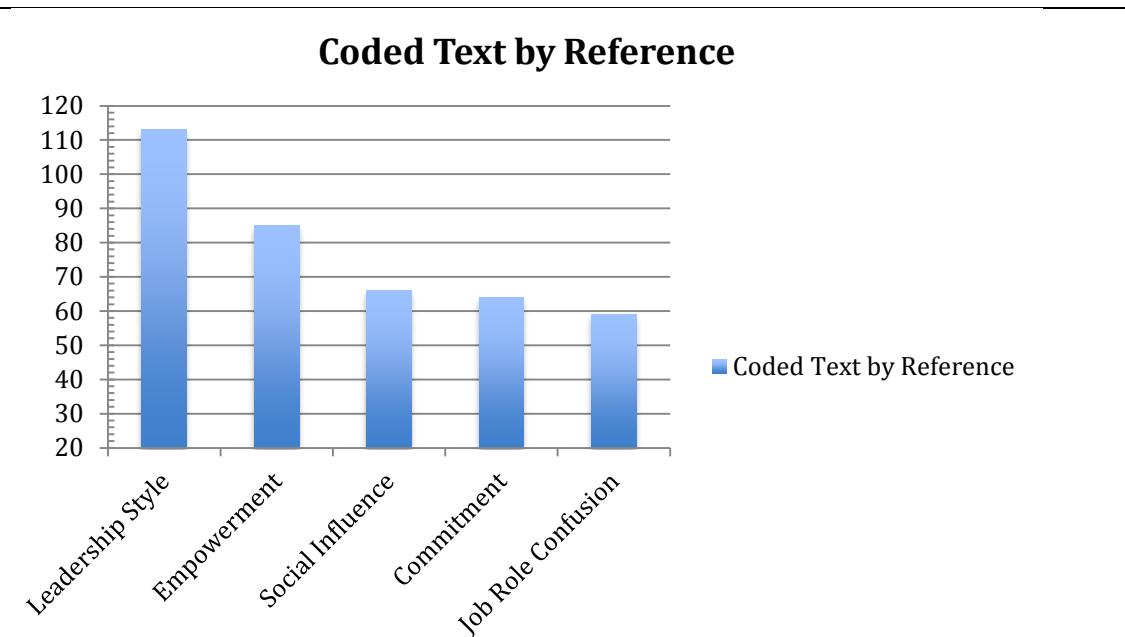


**Significant patterns within the coding process are displayed in the figure above by the number of sources coded.*

Another method used by the researcher to identify themes within the data was to examine the number of references, in which each theme appeared within the coded text. Figure 3 demonstrates the relationship between the coded text and the corresponding number of references per identified theme. Leadership Style consisted of 113 references within the sources. Empowerment consisted of 85 references within the sources. Social Influence consisted of 66 references within the sources. Commitment consisted of 64 references within the sources. Lastly, Job Role Confusion consisted of 59 references within the sources.

Figure 3

Themes Presented within References



**Significant patterns within the coding process are displayed in the figure above by the number of references coded.*

Leadership Style

During the coding process the researcher noted that the comments shared by participants reflect the team leaders' efforts to identify their own style of leadership. The story-sharing experience of the interview process offered the team leaders the opportunity to self-reflect. Team leaders demonstrated a variety of leadership attributes from assertive and direct to supportive, encouraging and even self-sacrificing. The significance of the theme Leadership Style will be presented throughout the following analysis of the following subthemes: The authoritative or assertive team leader, the reflective team leader, team leader as task facilitator, and team leader as representative of team.

The Authoritative or Assertive Team Leader

There was significant evidence that indicated team leaders adopted assertive leadership styles for the purposes of making sure their teams accomplished tasks and that meetings ran

smoothly. Eight participants referred to the need to enact an assertive approach with their team of teachers.

Evidence revealed specific examples of assertive behavior included, limiting the available options for choice making, assigning roles to team members as opposed to asking for volunteers, and setting rules such as meeting times, and norms for meeting expectations for team members, as evidenced by the statement shared by Participant 10:

We actually discussed when there were time issues with them that the meeting is going to start at 11:00. At 11:00 I expect you to be here. So that's always right, and I think they appreciate that, because 11:00 they are here, we are ready, the agenda is up and we're ready to go. We have someone taking minutes; everyone's got a job to do. And I will say phones have to be – no phones or phones turned over, if we're not using our computers kindly please close our computers. I think they respect that and we get the job done.

(P 10)

Giving direct instructions as opposed to waiting for input from team members is an example of an assertive leadership approach, as evidenced by Participant 7's statement, "I think I need to find the appropriate time and tell people what to do versus what do you want to do." (P7) Participant 14 explained a possible reason why team leaders choose to adopt an assertive approach in their comment, "If this staff doesn't see us as a person who is in charge or anything then there is no respect from that." (P14)

Data indicated that authoritative leadership is not only relevant to the team leaders who expressed the need to enact direct leadership behaviors. Participants are also concerned that lacking a certain level of authority makes the team leader position a challenge as evidenced by Participant 6's statement, "So, not because that team leader can't do anything they can do things

it is just that there is no authority. The team leader has no authority. The team leader has no ability to tell somebody what to do.” (P 6)

Evidence suggests that team members may feel that team leaders have more authority than the team leader believes they do, which will be further explored later in this chapter within the job role confusion theme. However, Participant 2 demonstrates a clear perspective on their level of authority and that the challenge in this case is that they do not have enough of it to complete the task being asked of her, as evidenced in the following statement:

There was a challenge because I can't tell the office that you can have coverage like I don't have that authority. So I think sometimes people assume that I have more authority than I do and when I don't that's kind of like I feel like they think that I am not doing my job when it's not actually my job. (P 2)

The data also revealed that the act of coordinating a group to accomplish a task could be a challenge. However, it is the ability to coordinate that can lead to the successful completion of the task (Northouse, 2012). In an effort to get all members of the teacher teams on board many team leaders have chosen to limit the options they present to their team, assign roles, and take on a more direct approach to leadership to avoid and minimize off-task behaviors.

The Reflective Team Leader

The following section shares evidence that team leaders within this school district are reflective in nature; 12 sources showed evidence of reflective behaviors, with a total of 29 references to reflective behaviors. Their responses to interview questions were stories of their experiences as teacher leaders as seen from their perspectives. Activities that team leaders participate in as teacher leaders, which inspire reflective behaviors, are leadership workshops and implementing measurement tools specific to leadership style identification. Workshops and

measurement tools, such as questionnaires and surveys that are focused on leadership style allow team leaders to become more aware of their leadership strengths and weaknesses, as evidenced by Participant 8 in the following comment:

The leadership style inventory that we have done that was really eye opening. Also that year we had the consultant coming, I have it at home, I can show you which gave us a whole questionnaire and it was pretty in-depth about all leadership styles. You had to think about only leadership styles and then it placed you, and then all the team leaders were able to look at where they fit on that spectrum together and really see the pros and cons of their leadership styles. (P 8)

Team leaders also expressed their reflective behaviors when explaining why they decide to lead the way they do. An example of the reflective behavior can be seen from Participant 9's comment where they compare previous leaders' styles to their own: "I think... be the better leader than what I'd seen before, which was that... it really wasn't about improving education, it was more about [complaining] about the bad kids." Participant 15 shares their experience of ongoing reflective behavior as a leader in the following excerpt:

I realized that I'm outgoing. I am very afraid of confrontation ... and I have very hard time unless the being authoritative and it means to happen and saying this is what has to occur or these are the rules that we are going to follow or these are the norms. I am nervous about I don't want to offend somebody in a certain way and so I am learning a lot how to ride out situations. (P 9)

Reflecting on the effectiveness of a leadership task is more meaningful than simply identifying what went right or wrong (Wheatley, 2006). The evidence suggests that self-reflective leaders can continue to assess their own development and identify areas for

improvement. Members of leadership teams can implement reflective behaviors in order to prevent the reoccurrence of old habits that do not add to the efficiency of the team (Wheatley, 2006).

Team Leader as Task Facilitator

When asked about their responsibilities, every team leader involved in this study mentioned the facilitation of tasks in response. Team leaders described tasks which originated from the administration (district or school-wide mandates). These tasks included setting the agenda, taking notes and dividing up jobs within the teams. When sharing about experiences with facilitating tasks most team leaders often gave the researcher a list of responsibilities. Many team leaders demonstrated ownership of the responsibility for these tasks by using language such as expressed by Participant 13, “I make sure that things get done;” and in Participant 4’s comment, “I’ll take charge of sending the email to our Administrator...” (P 4) The researcher noted that those who make sure things get done and those who take charge are demonstrating ownership and responsibility for task completion.

The team leaders also shared experiences, where they brought forth a new idea and became the originator of starting a new initiative to serve a specific need within the middle school setting. Participant 5 expressed her desire to bring these ideas to her school community in the following comment, “Because we try to be inventive and maybe there’s a way that as a team leader I could kind of find ways to shake things up a bit.” (P 5) More often, however, tasks such as running regular team meetings are the norm for the role of team leader. There were 47 references within the data to team leaders acting as task facilitators.

Team Leader as Representative of the Team

A total of 13 team leaders described their role as representative of their team. Team leaders also expressed that the act of helping others makes them feel like leaders in the middle school setting. Participant 8 demonstrated a representative perspective in the following words:

I feel that definitely my team has come to me with different problems, with different [concerns] like what should we do about this, what should we do about that. Even just say someone who, you know, I have team members who come and say ‘can we touch base about this’ and then, in the upcoming meeting, I do feel more like a leader in the school, like someone that you can turn to. Whereas maybe before I wasn’t recognized in that capacity. (P 8)

Team leaders expressed that they felt as though they are equals among team members. A common feeling was shared, which the team leaders expressed their purpose was to help the team accomplish certain tasks, as evidenced by Participant 5’s comment:

Like we are all colleagues, I keep the minutes, I do the paper work, I keep the notebook, and I facilitate our conversation about what we are doing here and about our kids and so our meetings are very relaxed, our protocols are pretty relaxed. (P 5)

Three participants described the representation of others, or helpfulness, specifically as being a mentor, often for new teachers. Participant 3 explains their perspective on their own mentorship in their comment, “New teachers came in and I would offer them help. I do enjoy helping new teachers. They will come to me for advice and help and I will feel like I can help and that is the good feeling.” (P 3) While Participant 13 demonstrates the same perspective, with a tone of obligation in the following statement, “We have to check in on and try to help our new teachers.” (P 13)

Four participants described their representative leadership style as one that takes the burden off of their teammates as evidenced by Participant 4's comment:

I think I understood that I was getting paid extra in this position and that teachers already had a lot on their plate, so if I could make their lives a little easier by kind of taking care of things on the back end, I would try to do that. (P 4)

Participant 8 shared this perspective as expressed in the following statement:

I have discovered that sometimes I take on a little bit more than maybe I can to because it could be a situation where a whole mess could be avoided, I just do it because I can see both sides of the situation, so sometimes I just handle it so that it's not a headache for everybody else. (P 8)

Data indicated that team leaders associate their role with the act of representing their teams. Representation can involve acts of servitude, which lessen the stress level or workload for other team leaders. Servant leadership theory aligns with these team leaders' perspectives of how a team leader should act in terms of protecting and serving their team members (Black, 2010). A major element of servant leadership theory is that leaders put the needs of others before their own to serve the good of the group.

Empowerment

The significant theme empowerment was identified upon the merging of three subthemes: Recruitment, decision-making, and information sharing. Each of these subthemes empowers team leaders within their role as a teacher to impact others. A total of 85 references to these subthemes exist within the data, making Empowerment the second most significant theme according to coding frequency.

Recruitment

Only one participant described an experience where they self-initiated the application process for becoming a team leader within their school. In the other 14 cases participants were asked explicitly by administrators to take on the team leader role. Upon further examination of these 14 cases, nine team leaders described their decision to take on position as hesitant or resistant. The remaining five participants who were asked to take on the team leader role by administrators perceived the chance to take on the new position as an opportunity. In the end all 15 participants accepted the team leader position and understood why they were asked to take it on. In most cases the team leader felt validated in their leadership skills by being selected by the principal, thus empowering the team leader to become a teacher leader as a member of the distributed leadership team within their school community. Participant 13 shared their feelings of hesitancy towards taking on the team leader position in the following comment:

Okay. I was asked by the principal and the assistant principal if I would take the role. I didn't want to. I honestly I didn't want the role. But then we started to try the approach with two teams so they needed another team leader for this grade for the people on my team... They needed to have enough experience. So they asked me to do it. That's how I got it. (P 13)

Participant 5 shared a similar outlook on the recruitment experience. However, they added that not only were they fit for the position, but also that it seemed others were not fit, thus limiting the principal's options for recruitment. Participant 5's comment regarding their experience is as follows:

When the principal came to me and asked me to be a team leader, what my principal basically said is I need a calm, steady person and I think that's because there were many

desperate types of personality; so my principal was [concerned]... my principal probably thought I was the least crazy one on my team. (P 5)

The data revealed that participants also perceived their recruitment as team leaders as a comfortable change or as an opportunity, as evidenced by Participant 9's comment below:

I'm ready, let me step up. A lot of that has to do with [the fact] I have strong opinions to begin with, I'd really do think, we could be much more effective school and so I decided the only way for me to do that is to involve [myself] with leadership. (P 9)

These participants shared similar stories of easy acceptance, such as Participant 3's statement, "I was asked to take it and I was comfortable taking it. My administrator who had asked me... I knew I enjoy working with her and that is what I recall." (P 3)

Research indicates that leaders benefit by choosing specific people for certain positions within their organization by matching skills and personality attributes with role responsibilities, which can be a healthy process as long as the leader is doing so to benefit the organization and not to accommodate their personal needs. It can benefit a system to recruit individuals that are representative of the larger group (Brown, 2007).

Decision-making

The theme decision-making appeared within the coded text quite frequently. A total of eight participants referenced the significance of decision-making at least once during the course of his or her interview. Direct citations were coded whenever the participants mentioned the term decision-making verbatim. In addition, the researcher coded situations where participants more implicitly described situations highlighting the decision-making process within their middle school setting. There were 21 references within the data pertaining to the decision-making process, inclusive of team leaders within the middle school setting.

Throughout the interview process team leaders discussed the significance of feeling included in the decision-making process as it impacts the larger school community. Participant 9 stated the following comment, in regards to their feelings about being involved in the decision-making process:

My job is to make sure we make decisions that are good for the students and good for the school. If team leaders are going to help build a school culture, which I think is one of our jobs is trying to facilitate that, then you've got to let them be a part of a decision making process and that's just one that's convenient. We should set up a really transparent leadership model at the level where the team leaders and the administrators interact, in which the administrators make it clear that yes, at the end of the day, their name is going [on] the decisions. It's not just that you're valued... I value your input, not that there is a clear process for making decisions in which the team leaders actually have a defined and consistent role. (P 9)

In each case, the researcher interpreted these comments as particularly powerful because the participants made it clear how important involvement is with the decision-making process is within the middle school setting. Team leaders also expressed the challenges of not being involved with the decision-making process, as evidenced by Participant 15 in the following statement, "We don't just make the decisions ourselves and we really voice that it's not always our decision to make. We can't decide...if that's the school policy; this is something that is coming from above us. So that is a huge challenge." (P 15)

It is evident that some teacher leaders may not see their role as an official leadership role, reserving that role for administrators alone (Angelle, & DeHart, 2011). However, for leadership teams to function successfully, even the informal leaders play a critical role in the decision-

making process (Stone-Johnson, 2014). All levels of leadership must be included in the leadership process in order to institutionalize an efficient distributed leadership model.

Participative decision-making processes include all levels of membership and encourages thoughts to travel not only from the highest-level authority down, but also from the bottom up as well (Christensen, Clayton, Dyer, & Gregersen, 2011).

Information Sharing

Team leaders identify situations where they are asked to disseminate information from administrators to their team, more often than team leaders are bringing information to administrators from their teams. The mention of organized meetings, for the purpose of obtaining and sharing information appeared frequently in the interview transcriptions.

Participants mentioned three main modes of sharing information as members of a distributed leadership team. The first of which is attending meetings with administration as indicated in the following excerpt from Participant 13's statement, "I meet with all the team leaders and the Principal every two weeks and then I meet with the Principal just with the other LF. Same thing every two weeks we meet, just with him alone." (P 13)

Evidence revealed the second mode of information sharing, which is by meeting with whole-school leadership team and the third subcategory is running regular meetings with team of teachers. By attending regular meetings with administration team leaders often have access to information before other teachers as indicated by Participant 1's statement:

I just have a little bit more heads up about that was going on little bit rough behind the scenes not too much, I mean the administration here is pretty open with us and they do let us know what's going on, so we may know things a little bit of head of time. (P 1)

Team leaders are then tasked with delivering the information to their team, as evidenced by Participant 7's comment:

Well, I mean obviously I think I have to be more in the know and have more answers.

Because I act as kind of a filter, I mean its fine sharing information but I think really at the end of the day it's... can that person share all the information, all the ideas that are coming at them from both sides in the way that's going to benefit everybody? (P 7)

As mentioned in the previous participant's comment, team leaders perceive themselves as messengers or filters of information from one group to another. Meetings with whole-school leadership teams allow team leaders to collaborate with other leaders, which is essential when sharing information. The team leaders run regular, team meetings with their team of teachers, consisting of eight to 13 teachers. The team leader collects and communicates information to the administrator from the team, though team leaders perceive their role primarily as messengers from "the top-down," meaning from administration to teachers.

Face to face communication can be beneficial for the information sharing process (Christensen, Clayton, Dyer, & Gregersen, 2011), which may be why the team leaders tend to struggle with the information sharing piece within a distributed model as they often perceive themselves as the messenger of someone else's message. The sense of face-to-face communication from the administrators to the team of teachers is not occurring as regularly as the team leaders are able to communicate face to face with their team members. Therefore, it is important for administrators to attend team meetings as regularly as possible.

Social Influence

The significant theme social influence surfaced as patterns emerged within the coded text to indicate the importance of interpersonal relationships on the team leaders' social and

professional experiences as a member of the distributed leadership team within the middle school setting. The team leaders described their role is an integral part of the distributed leadership model, and of the school community as a whole. The social influence theme consists of three subthemes: Collaboration with other team leaders, support from administrators, dealing with conflict and acting as a liaison between various groups.

Collaboration with Other Team Leaders

The first subtheme indicates collaboration with like-position colleagues is beneficial for team leaders. One of the three middle schools within this district arranges their teams so that each team leader shares the role with another team leader, which allows them to collaborate and share responsibilities. Collaboration helps the team leaders to validate their leadership activities and the pace at which they are guiding their team, as evidenced in Participant 9's statement, "I have to kind of coordinate with all the other team leaders particularly the other eighth grade team leader. We really try to make sure that we don't get too far off the same page." (P 9)

Data indicates that team leaders appreciate the support of their colleagues. In particular when it comes to problem solving, as indicated in Participant 2's comment:

Well, I do like that my position is shared because even though it means half the money it also means that I don't have to try to do it all myself and that if I am not sure how to handle something or if I am not sure an approach there is two of us, so we can figure it out together when we are talk. (P 2)

Collaboration can inspire innovative ideas and creative thinking (Christensen, Clayton, Dyer & Gregersen, 2011; Creanor, 2014). Keeping new ideas flowing will also allow for creative problem solving and the opportunity to foster the development of original ideas. Collaboration

within a team of members who share the same job role can help to develop a sense of community and boost confidence of the team members with their abilities to accomplish professional goals.

Support from Administrators

Team leaders made evident the importance of being supported by their principal in their leadership role. Participants described their principals as being supportive, involved, or as a positive influence on the distributed leadership process, as evidenced by Participant 10's comment:

My principal really expressed to me specifically that he values me. He values my judgment and values my role in the school. So I get that firsthand which is nice. I also got it from another principal who also actually told me, came up to me privately and just told me how much he respected me and valued the job that I was doing. I get a lot of assurance that way. But I think that's wonderful because – everyone needs it, the kids need it, we need it as teachers, and we need it as school leaders. (P 10)

Many of the stories shared in response to interview questions were focused on how positive feedback from administrators has motivated team leaders in their leadership efforts, as evidenced by Participant 1's comment:

I have to make speech as the representative for the sixth grade team and that's one of my favorite nights when we tell you, but he always says you do just a great job, you've really got a good way of expressing everything and you represent the team well. (P 1)

The evidence suggests that team leaders seek support from the principal when dealing with particularly difficult matters such as conflicts between team members. Participant 10 describes an experience of seeking the principal's support to deal with an interpersonal conflict in the following comment, "I thought that was challenging because she always challenged my

decisions and I think I let it bother me a lot and so I actually spoke to an administrator, confidentially, about it.” (P 10)

Research indicates that principals are the main leaders in the school setting. Middle schools that implement a distributed leadership model, inclusive of the teacher leaders function most efficiently if the principal is seen as being someone the teachers trust (Fullan, 2014). Communication is often a key component of building trust. Therefore, the team leaders and the principal should work to open the lines of communication in order to develop a strong, supportive leadership team.

Dealing with Conflict

As demonstrated in the section above, team leaders seek the support from administrators when necessary. However, team leaders also find themselves in a position where they are mediating social conflicts between team members on their own. Participant 2 shared a similar experiences as evidenced in her comment, “So sometimes people come to me when there are more of a personality conflict or things aren’t going between other teachers assuming that I should be the one to handle it.” (P 2) Participant 15 expresses how dealing with these social conflicts impacts their ability to successfully accomplish team tasks in the following comment:

So that was a huge challenge, trying to take over team that we knew was extremely dysfunctional and extremely negative and very cliquey with groups. . . . and try and make it one and try still get over daily routines that our schedule is down and still get things accomplished. (P 15)

Participant 11 shared their reasoning as to why their peers may seek out their support in dealing with conflicts in the following statement, “People come in and talk to me and feel like they can talk without worrying that it’s going to go any further.” (P 11)

Organizations, such as school communities are composed of individuals and groups with varying opinions. Therefore, conflict to some degree is an unavoidable dynamic of any organization (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The leaders of these systems are the ones who are responsible for monitoring and ultimately, resolving these conflicts. Though the authority level of the team leader is undefined, they still tend to become those responsible for conflict mediation or resolution for matter affecting their team members. It is up to the team leader to decide whether or not the administrators need to get involved.

Team Leader as Liaison

Evidence revealed that team leaders often referred to themselves as, or described themselves as serving in a liaison position. Patterns emerged where team leaders specifically identified their role as one that communicates with various levels of leadership within the middle school setting. Participant 7 describes their responsibilities as a team leader in the following comment, “And the first (responsibility as a team leader) is being kind of like I said, an intermediary between administration and my team of teachers.” (P 7) Participant 2 shares a similar perspective of their role as a liaison as evidenced in the following comment:

I think that the teacher leader needs to be someone who can liaison between the team and the administration that I think that both sides will view that person as a positive role model, that is someone that people on the team and administration can rely to and respect equally. (P 2)

Participant 4 clearly explains their perspective on their role as a liaison, as demonstrated in the following comment, “Well, we are the liaison between the administration and our teams, so if there are some issues or some points of consideration, then the team leaders would be the ones to bring it up to the administrators.” (P 4)

The research indicates that team leaders often perceive their role as an in-between position that aims to communicate important information to administration and their teacher teams. Within a distributed leadership model communication is key for ensuring the various levels of leaders are able to share ideas and reach common goals (Ediger, 2014; Fullan, 2014).

Commitment

Eleven team leaders expressed an imbalance of time allotted during the workday to accomplish all of the tasks necessary as a team leader. Therefore, time obligation is the first subtheme within the significant theme: Commitment. The second subtheme is compensation as eight references were noted to team leaders expressing the feeling that the compensation for the team leader position is disproportionate to the responsibilities of the position. The third subtheme within the theme Commitment is professional development as team leaders are committed to participating in meaningful professional development for their position and because they are committed to leading their teams successfully even when there is a lack of leadership-related professional learning opportunities.

Time Obligation

The evidence revealed that when teachers take on the team leader role they are still responsible for being full time teachers while carrying out the responsibilities of leading their team and participating in the school's leadership team. Team leaders expressed that the act of balancing time can be a challenge, as evidenced by Participant 7's statement:

I feel like I spend half of my prep time now or free time doing team leader things. So there is also a lot of finding a balance between regular school work and other stuff that was very different from last year, but I think I kind of have that all figured out now but that is a big difference. There's a time commitment and you have to make room for

everything... So for example even during lunch I usually eat lunch in my room, not because I don't want to see anybody, but because I have stuff to do. (P 7)

Participant 4 further explains the need for designated work time and the challenges that they experience because of the lack of time in the following statement:

I mean in my opinion, if you want the teacher to have more of that kind of role, then perhaps you need to take away a class or something. Because it just becomes unmanageable if you have three preps and then you have to manage your daily team time, meetings and report back and basically do what my current grade level administrator does on a daily basis. I think it's important for a principal to understand that teachers have a lot on their plate and to assign team leaders to do administrative type responsibilities, it's a little unrealistic and it puts, I think, undue pressure on the team leader. (P 4)

Beyond accomplishing tasks associated with the team leader role team leaders need to make time to become more involved in their school community as well. Team leaders feel persons best suited for the team leader role are attentive to details and information that concerns members of their team. They also describe a need for team leaders to be involved in their school community in ways other than leading their team. Participant 8 demonstrates their perspectives on being involved by sharing the following comment:

I've become more involved in the school, become more involved with meeting other people, working closely with other people having different relationships with the other members of the school and I don't think that would have previously had if I never got into this role. (P 8)

An example of being more involved starts with being more visible and having a presence, as evidenced by Participant 7's statement, "I think the people expect to see me more often. So I

guess be more open than... you know being more visible so that people can know me better so they feel more comfortable around me.” (P 7)

Data indicates that team leaders commit much of their time towards ensuring successful fulfillment of leadership responsibilities. Though it is a commitment by these team leaders to spend time on these leadership acts, it is important that they do so. The reason is that it is these leaders who are at the core of the school community, leading and representing their teams. It is necessary for members of an organization who are closest to the problems to get involved in order to make positive change (Brown, 2007). In school communities the team leaders are the leaders who are the closest to the problems of the school community as they are also teachers and representatives of their teacher teams.

Compensation

Participants described the time they spend on responsibilities associated with the team leader role. Evidence suggests that team leaders feel that compensation should be increased for their position, as evidenced in Participant 1’s comment:

I just think that they should pay us more because the time that’s actually involved is lot more than they put in contract. But yeah, that goes with teaching in general. If we really got paid by the minute or the hour, it’d be a very different paycheck, that’s all part of it, right? (P 1)

Participant 14 expressed that taking on certain challenges associated with the team leader role isn’t worth the compensation in the following statement:

We had some teachers who fight back and whatever and it’s like are we supposed to tell, like what are we supposed to say and how far is that supposed to go with our 10 dollars we are going to make a week? (P 14)

Participant 3 shared the perspective that the compensation is not equivalent to what is asked of the team leaders. They added the point that, money is not the reason why team leaders take on their leadership role:

You know... I don't talk about money much, but money often does correlate with or sometimes often, I guess often does correlate [with] responsibilities... or sometimes it does, and, you know, two dollars a day or something nobody is doing this for money.

(P 3)

While team leaders appreciate being recognized for the work they do, they feel an increase in compensation would be appropriate, as evidenced in Participant 2's comment, "I like being recognized for the work that I do. I wish I was paid for the work that I do." (P 2)

Though the school system is unique in that unions typically bargain contracts to settle on compensation issues, many employees may perceive payment as a reward that should represent the work done to earn the compensation. In business organizations the leader may be able to use compensation as a reward (Bennis & Nanus, 2012). Though the business model is external to the team leaders' workplace environment participants are aware of the continued disparity within the work-compensation dynamic in the field of education, as teachers and as teacher leaders.

Professional Development

Participants suggested that certain types of professional development are needed that would benefit the person fulfilling the team leader role such as workshops in problem solving strategies, teamwork skills, and training with data comprehension.

Training with strategies to solve problems with team issues is an area that participants suggested for professional development as evidenced in Participant 5's comment, "I'd really like some training on team motivation and team cohesiveness; especially when you have 'the crew,'

you have a couple of team members that just don't get along. Their styles are completely different.” (P 5) Participant 13 shared their perspective on the need for professional development by stating simply, “Any team building activities would be helpful. (P 13)

Only five of the 15 team leaders are math teachers. These individuals did not mention the need for training in data literacy. Six team leaders expressed that the skill of being able to understand data is essential for teacher leadership in today's data driven education system, as evidenced by Participant 7's statement:

I mean this is very specific but I would also say in this day and age there should be a person who is good at math and relatively good at statistics and understanding all of the new data driven stuff because the leadership team is often called upon to [explain] why and that kind of thing. I think it's a hard thing to keep up with so you have to be kind of sharp and you need to know what certain things mean especially. When it comes to crunching the data, I think it's something that, for example, the leadership team could use a little bit of help with sometimes. (P 7)

Participant 5 shares a similar concern with the lack of professional training for team leaders with data literacy in the following comment:

I would really like some training in... We've had some training in the data cycle. You know research in your classroom, in terms of collecting data and, because so often people don't want to do these data cycles, because they feel they are not collecting good data. It's hard to motivate people if they feel like you know... Is what we are doing valuable with the data? (P 5)

Participant 10 suggested a particular training in data that they found to be extremely rewarding, as evidenced in the following comment, “I would definitely recommend Data Wise at

Harvard it was the best experience of my life. There's Data Wise, which is using data on a team such as ours, an instructional data team to inform instruction." (P 10)

Proper training for team leaders should match the need for the growth and development of certain skills (Northouse, 2012). Having an open dialogue between team leaders and the principal could assist a distributed leadership team in better identifying these skills, in need of development. Shields (2010) suggested that when developing a professional character, an organization should consider the deep and equitable changes that could occur as a result. In other words, schools should provide intentional, meaningful professional development opportunities that assist team leaders in the development of specific skills, so that the team leaders' experiences are valuable to the whole community. It is often seen as the principal's responsibility to ensure that team leaders are receiving the necessary professional development to successfully fulfill the responsibilities associated with their role (Fullan, 1993).

Job Role Confusion

Job role confusion is a unique and important theme that presented itself within the transcribed interview text. The researcher took time to decide if, in fact, the data pertaining to Job Role Confusion was substantial enough to become a major theme. Ultimately, and after much consideration of reference frequency, the patterns emerged, and it became clear that Job Role Confusion is a major theme. Job role confusion is a theme that is significant to the perspectives of team leaders as to how their role impacts the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting. The researcher pondered the following question: How can a professional serving in any leadership capacity understand their place in the leadership process if their own role needs clarification? The two subthemes within the theme Job Role Confusion are: Unclear expectations of responsibility and unclear level of authority.

Unclear Expectations of Responsibility

Team leaders shared experiences of feeling a sense of confusion about how they should act or what they should do as the team leader in a particular situation. Explicit statements focused on the feeling that they aren't always clear as to what their role is as members of the distributed leadership team, as evidenced in the following statement made by Participant 13, "I think that sometimes it's not clear to even hear what the role of the teacher leader is." (P 13)

Evidence suggests that the theme job confusion extends beyond the team leaders' perceptions of self, as the data indicates that other key figures within their school community do not always know the role the team leader plays within the leadership process, as evidenced by Participant 6's statement:

I don't even think unless they (administration) would – unless they (administration) say at the beginning of the year, who the team leaders are, I don't think anyone would know. I think if you ask the first year teacher who came in before the beginning of the year who goes to SDT (school data team), I don't think they could tell you, I don't think if you ask an average person who goes with this crisis team, they could tell you, it's like who is in the crisis team, I don't think anyone could list the names of the people in the crisis team, I don't think anybody can tell you what goes on in SDT (school data team) or what goes on at the crisis team meeting... even the people that are in those meetings couldn't tell you what goes on in those meetings, like what actually is getting accomplished... like a clear goal, a clear process, a clear like... what is our purpose? I don't think they could tell you.

(P 6)

Research indicates that team leaders did not attend an orientation for teacher leadership to clarify and define their roles as teacher leaders. Without fully understanding the team leader's

role and responsibilities teams do not function to maximum efficiency, as indicated by

Participant 1 in the following statement:

No one really sat down with us and said okay I want you to do this and I want you to do that. I just think it'd be important for us to have more clear direction as far as what our role is. Because even just my own dealings with like the subject enough in our building, not really knowing is this question for this person or not? Do we go to this person? And I think some kind of training for everyone really as far as what that role for the person is, you know what I mean ... how do you use your coordinators to best [purpose]? I mean it's just a lot of grey areas. (P 1)

Empowered employees tend to handle responsibility well (Kotter, 2012). Therefore, employees in a leadership position who do not understand the expectations of their responsibility level may also feel disempowered. Situations would be more difficult for a team leader to deal with if they do not understand their role within the context of the situation. A lack of confidence in how one should act at the workplace could lead to professional inefficiencies.

Unclear Level of Authority

Though team leaders were noted earlier in this chapter as choosing to enact an authoritative or assertive leadership approach, on the whole, the understanding by team leaders as to how much authority they are expected to have is unclear. Team leaders try to help their teammates with challenges even when they are not sure if doing so is actually their responsibility, as evidenced in Participant 2's statement:

So sometimes people come to me when there is a personality conflict or things aren't going well between other teachers, assuming that I should be the one to handle it. I had no business resolving that conflict. That was really for the principal to solve it. And I

didn't even know how to handle it because I felt like it wasn't my role. Like I am not their boss, I am not their mediator. So I tried to pull out the policy and go over with them but at some point just had to pass it off to the principal. (P 2)

Team leaders struggle to find balance between being a peer and the one who leads their peers with an unclear level of authority, as evidenced by Participant 9's comment:

I'm not the one or the other, I'm not an administrator, I'm not teacher and this class A administrator, I mean, particularly when you go to a meeting with an administrator and they tell you you're going to tell your teams. You know... so being the person who is facilitating the conversation, then with some unpopular things... frustrate people and so, I know that to the degree I'm kind of, I feel like, I'm almost looked at as one of them rather than one of us. (P 9)

Limiting a leader's level of authority may restrict the abilities of that leader to accomplish certain tasks as a sense of urgency is established more quickly when a figure of authority states something needs to be done (Kotter, 2012). When a leader does not even know how much authority they do have, a sense of urgency is even more difficult to create. The challenge becomes the team leaders' ability to get their team members on board with task completion when they do not directly see the need for the task and do not perceive the team leader as an authoritative figure.

Summary

The purpose of this interpretive, qualitative study was to examine how team leaders working within the middle school setting feel their teacher leadership positions influence the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting. The researcher interviewed 15 team leaders, collecting both demographic and experiential data. Interviews were transcribed and

simultaneous coding methods were implemented to code the transcribed text. During the analysis process careful attention was made to identify patterns within the coded text, which supported the main research questions. As indicated in chapter three, the researcher developed interview questions and linked each to a specific research question (Appendix B). The linking process helped to ensure that the experiential stories shared by participants were relevant to the main research questions. Each participant shared experiences at his or her comfort level and gave consideration to each of the interview questions.

The first cycle of coding allowed the researcher to identify essential meaning within each story shared by participants. The second cycle of coding allowed the researcher to further identify patterns within these codes. Categories, with similar meaning were joined together into larger sets of coded text, providing the researcher with the ability to develop a more meaningful interpretation of the findings overall in connection with the main research questions.

Five major themes were identified during the analysis process: Leadership style, empowerment, social influence, commitment and job role confusion. These themes presented in this study give significance to the perspectives of the team leaders working within the middle school setting, which is lacking within the literature on previous research studies (Grenda, 2014). Each significant theme, and its corresponding subthemes are full of data supporting the interpretation by the research to address each of the following main research questions:

1. In what ways might team leaders feel differently about their school's leadership processes since they have become an official leader within their school's organizational structure?
2. What workplace experiences have been significant in terms of shaping the team leaders' perceptions of the distributed leadership process within their school setting?

3. How does being in a position of leadership impact the team leaders' feelings towards interactions with other teachers who are not in an official position of leadership?

These main research questions will be answered in the following chapter. Chapter five will share the researcher's interpretations of the findings, explain the implications of this study, and suggest the recommendations for both future action and future study.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This study addressed the need for exploration of teacher leader perspectives on how their leadership role influences the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting (Angelle & DeHart, 2011; Northouse, 2012). Exploring these perspectives by conducting, personal one on one interviews with 15 of the 16 team leaders, across three middle schools within the same school district allowed the researcher to ask insightful, probing questions about the teacher leaders' experiences as members of a distributed leadership team.

Careful consideration was made to obtain permission from each school's principal, invite participants and notify participants of the researcher's plan for maintaining confidentiality, including the signing of consent forms and the identification of participants by assigning numerical identifiers.

Interview sessions lasted between 18 and 38 minutes. Each participant seemed comfortable sharing his or her stories with the researcher. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded within the NVivo software system for careful analysis. The following five themes were identified as significant during the analysis process: Leadership style, empowerment, social influence, commitment and job role confusion. The following section will explain the researcher's interpretation of findings in connection with each of the significant themes identified within the data.

Interpretation of Findings

Detailed analysis of the data has allowed the researcher to identify significant themes, which address each of the following main research questions:

Research Question One

Research question one: In what ways might team leaders feel differently about their school's leadership processes since they have become an official leader within their school's organizational structure? All five of the significant themes identified in this study impact team leaders' feelings towards their school's leadership process. Themes and their application to the research question are explained below.

Empowerment. The evidence suggests that team leaders feel an increased sense of empowerment since becoming teacher leaders within the distributed leadership team in the middle school setting. The findings indicate that team leaders become more involved in their school community and tend to have strong opinions on the leadership process that they are a part of. Participants referred to their level of involvement as "having buy-in." The heightened level of empowerment increases when team leaders become active participants on the leadership team, as opposed to active members of the grade-level teacher teams. Participants easily described and identified how their school's leadership process works and how the process is in need of improvement to increase its efficiency. Therefore, increased empowerment also leads to increased attentiveness to evaluating the leadership process of which they are a part. Though each team leader associates their role with various degrees of importance or influence, each team leader takes ownership of their role. The data suggests that the team leaders create their own identity as a teacher leader and their own understanding of what their role should be and they fulfill that self-expectation, which makes them feel more connected to their school's leadership process as they play a large role within the process itself.

Commitment and job role clarification. Findings revealed that team leaders are more aware since becoming leaders, of what is happening in their school community because they find

they need to have the answers for others when asked about what is happening around the school. Team leaders tend to be involved in other leadership roles besides leading the team. In other words, they become more involved in their school community. The increased level of involvement and awareness of professional needs clearly demonstrates the team leaders' commitment to the workplace. Team leaders were equally confident to address needs within their position, or areas of concern such as compensation, professional development or job role clarification. Though team leaders suggest further clarification of the role is needed, it is clear that team leaders understand their school and the functionality of the leadership more since becoming a part of the distributed leadership team.

Social influence and leadership style: Team leader as facilitator. Being in charge of teams and tasks increases the amount of social responsibility for team leaders. Team leaders often describe their experience as a leader as more successful when their team is a well-functioning team. Tasks are often distributed among team members during team meetings and it is up to the team leader to ensure the successful completion of the tasks occurs. The goal is not to simply divide up the work, but to work together to reach a cohesive, complete objective as set on the agenda by the team leader. Team leaders ask their teachers for input on what should appear on the agenda. While working to organize and run team meetings team leaders occasionally find themselves in the middle of social situations that need guidance. Team leaders often act to direct or redirect the actions of the adults around them for a more positive, productive work experience, which might mean scheduling meetings only when it is absolutely necessary or making efforts to talk directly or privately with teachers about their actions.

Task facilitation is a necessary element of leadership. Tasks such as agenda setting are essential for effective leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Without the essential process of

facilitating tasks the organizational piece of team meetings would not exist. Acts of facilitating tasks are not always equivalent in terms of the importance of running a team. For instance, in a distributed leadership model it is critical that the team leader acts primarily as a facilitator of conversation and discussion, allowing all members of the team to share their ideas (Christensen, Clayton, Dyer & Gregersen, 2011). Acting as a facilitator impacts the team leaders' perspective of self, empowered as a leader who facilitates tasks and communication for their team.

Being able to work with the principal allows team leaders to bring in the element of authority when needed to help resolve more serious issues when needed. Team leaders were confident while sharing positive experiences, such as receiving support from colleagues or administrators during a challenging time.

Research Question Two

Research question 2: What workplace experiences have been significant in terms of shaping the team leaders' perceptions of the distributed leadership process within their school setting? After conducting a detailed analysis of the interview data several conclusions can be made about the workplace experiences that have been significant in shaping the team leaders' perceptions of the distributed leadership process within their school setting. Evidence suggests that experiences, which make the team leaders feel a sense of *empowerment*, shape these perceptions most dramatically; in particular, the acts of decision-making and information sharing. Discovering one's leadership style and social influences also play strong roles in shaping the perceptions of what workplace experiences have been significant in terms of shaping the team leaders' perceptions of the distributed leadership process within their school setting.

Empowerment: Decision-making and information sharing. The evidence suggests that leaders feel an increased level of involvement since becoming members of their

school's leadership process. Participants shared that a major aspect of their involvement is the role they play within the information sharing process. However, the information sharing process seems to limit the involvement of the team leaders in the decision-making process. Team leaders suggest that administrators often give information to them and it is then their job to deliver the information appropriately to their team of teachers. Team leaders often do not have the opportunity or time to receive information from their team and bring that information back to the administrators. In other words team leaders generally perceive the decision-making and information sharing process to be mostly *top-down*, where team leaders are the messengers between administrators and the teaching staff.

Empowerment, leadership style, and social influence. Findings indicate that the act of understanding their personal leadership style allows team leadership to reflect on their own strengths, which impact the distributed leadership process within their school. Surveys, questionnaires, consultation and professional development allow the team leaders to better understand what they bring to the team in terms of skill. Many team leaders referenced the value of these professional learning experiences in order to better understand their personal, professional strengths and weaknesses.

Social experiences impact the team leaders' perceptions of the distributed leadership process within their school setting. Being entrusted by an administrator to take charge of specific leadership tasks empowers the team leaders and increases their commitment to their school community. Team leaders who represent teams with strong, positive dynamics say that sharing information and reaching objectives is fairly simple. Team leaders who represent teams with more challenging social dynamics need to be more direct or firm when communicating with team members in order to reach meeting goals. Occasionally, these meetings happen less

frequently for efficiency sake, or administrators attend team meetings to assist with task completion or to mediate team discussions. It is up to the team leader to arrange these needs of the team, which increases their sense of self-importance.

Research Question Three

Research question 3: How does being in a position of leadership impact the team leaders' feelings towards interactions with other teachers who are not in an official position of leadership? The evidence suggests that the degree to which team leaders feel their leadership role impacts their relationship with their colleagues is dependent upon their experiences, which make them feel a sense of empowerment, such as their involvement with the decision-making process. Other significant factors impacting the feelings of team leaders towards their relationships with colleagues include their experiences with social influences and the discovery process of one's own leadership style.

Empowerment: Decision-making & social influence. Often times, administrators select who they want to be in a team leader position based on the leadership attribute the person possesses and a particular need of an existing team. In fact, most team leaders reported being asked, specifically to become the team leader as opposed to self-seeking the position on their own accord. Evidence suggests that some team leaders perceive the apparent recruitment process as an immediate change of responsibility that causes their colleagues to view them as somewhat of an outsider. Participants feeling as though their colleagues view them as an outsider were hesitant to take on the new role, as they knew, by being a team member how challenging it could be in terms of dealing with the social conflicts that may arise within a team. Evidence suggests that team leaders were concerned that their involvement with these social conflicts, due to their new position would negatively impact their relationships with their

colleagues. Participants referred often to the way in which their involvement in the social realm of the leadership process can be challenging as they find themselves involved in situations and conflicts that impact their relationships with other teachers.

While other experiences shared by participants indicate that no change in relationships occurred. These team leaders perceive their change in professional responsibility as an opportunity to enact their leadership skills or simply do not feel that their role is an authoritative one and therefore do not perceive a change in relationships as a result of their leadership role.

Leadership style. Evidence suggests that in order to find balance between leading the teams and staying collegial team leaders have made intentional efforts to identify and enact their most effective leadership style. Those team leaders who perceive themselves as a team member, representative or mentor tended to express feelings of equality with their team members. Team leaders who perceived themselves as a more assertive type of leader shared a same perception, yet these team leaders mentioned that a more direct approach to task facilitation was needed to overcome the reluctance of team members. Team leaders do need to interact or engage with team members more often, as leader, when challenges or conflicts arise.

It is important to note that, according to the team leaders the term *official* is not to be confused with *having authority* in connection to the team leader role presented within this study. Team leaders, in fact, share conflicting stories about how assertive they need to be in order to facilitate meetings and complete tasks with their teams. Team leaders, most often refer to themselves as representatives or members of their teams. Yet, attention was given to the feelings of being somewhat of an outsider due to the position being an official leadership role, but a non-authoritative role. Team leaders often find themselves serving in a mentorship role, especially

with new teachers. Mediation is an action that team leaders find themselves faced with when there is a dysfunctional situation occurring within their team dynamics.

Implications

The following section introduces and explains the implications of this study. These areas identify situations where findings of this study can help to better the field of education, in particular distributed leadership models within the middle school level, which are inclusive of teacher leadership.

Team Leaders Learn from Each Other

Team leaders can learn from the experiences of other team leaders. Team leaders should be given time to interact with other team leaders, to increase collaborative efforts on school and district-wide change initiatives.

Though each of the three middle schools that participated in this study are a part of the same school district, some differences exist, which change the dynamics of the team leader role and the experience of the team leaders as members of the distributed leadership team within the middle school setting. One school shares the team leader role, while the other two do not. The sharing of positions changes the compensation, workload, and responsibilities of the team leader. Therefore, these team leaders feel less burdened by the workload. However, their sense of empowerment and commitment may be lower than the team leaders who have an increased level of involvement with the school's leadership process. High levels of involvement encourage a sense of commitment and a group desire to transform the school in a positive way (Shields, 2010).

Principals and Administrators

By clearly identifying the capabilities and willingness of each team leader within their

leadership team, principals and team leaders can more flexibly and effectively step forward or back and share in the leadership role (Northouse, 2012). When planning how to best implement the role of team leader principals and administrators should consider the perspectives of the team leaders themselves. Understanding how these team leaders feel about their role will allow for more thoughtful planning of professional development, or professional learning experiences for these leaders. Taking the time to understand the needs of the team leaders will also increase the trust between the team leaders and principals (Fullan, 2014). Teacher leadership is powerful. Including a distributed leadership structure within the middle school setting empowers not only the teachers who lead but the principals as well, as their leadership team and leadership process becomes stronger and more effective.

This District

As stated earlier, collaboration is often the key element in unification efforts between various stakeholder groups (Gale & Bishop, 2014). The findings of this study can help this district to better understand the power, of harnessing and welcoming teacher leadership positions at the middle school, or even other levels of education. With the information shared within this study, this school district can more intentionally recognize the work done by team leaders. Positive feedback given to the team leaders will increase the feeling of support, which encourages commitment to the workplace (Aydin, Sarier, & Uysal, 2013; Mayer, Donaldson, LeChasseur, Welton, & Cobb, 2013; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979).

Students and Parents

Recognizing our team leaders, more effectively meeting their professional needs and empowering them to become stronger leaders within our schools will make leadership teams more efficient; thus, more capable of meeting the needs of our students. An essential aspect of

the team leader role has to do with understanding how to effectively use data relevant to student achievement. Often times, the social emotional needs of the students are not the major focus of team meetings. Increasing the ability of the team leaders to do their job effectively, may allow teams to address a broader range of needs for students, including their social and emotional needs, which not only benefits the students but also the teachers and the climate of the school in general (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012).

Districts Who Have Yet to Embrace Team Leaders

Districts who do not have teacher leadership as an official element of their middle school leadership teams may consider the findings of this study using in seeing the benefit of the role to their schools. These districts can also benefit by starting off with more effective methods of application for the role and training for the position based off of the professional needs identified in this study. Ultimately, team leaders participating in this study shared invaluable information to demonstrate how important their role is within the middle school setting. Mediators, liaisons, representatives of teachers, data analyzers, schedule setters, and supporters of administrators are only a few descriptors outlined within this study by the teacher leaders themselves. By thoughtfully and clearly defining the team leader position, carefully hiring the applicants, and continuing to tailor ongoing professional supports school districts can harness the power of distributed leadership models, inclusive of the teacher leaders.

Recommendations for Action

Based on the analysis of 15 interview transcriptions, the researcher has developed the following recommendations:

- 1) The primary recommendation for action is to encourage principals to make time for, and welcome feedback from team leaders to express their professional needs.

Job role confusion, a significant theme emerged from the data within this study. Clarification needs to be an ongoing process for team leaders, as situations present themselves. Team leaders should be presented to staff at the start of each year, so that all teachers know who fulfills these positions. Communication is key for successfully institutionalizing a distributed leadership team (Ediger, 2014; Fullan, 2014).

- 2) Careful consideration should be given to ensure information is being shared from the top-down and from the larger group of teacher back up to administrators in a clearly defined way.
- 3) Dissemination of essential information should be done in a regular, reliable manner so that all teachers have access to it. Such as, within a daily bulletin or a weekly email to more successfully present the whole-school with the same information without it being filtered or delivered by a third party.
- 4) Consideration should be given to team leaders' involvement in the decision-making process, which is especially true when it comes to developing essential guiding statements such as a school vision or mission statement (Kouzes & Posner, 2006).
- 5) Team leaders need more time to balance their professional duties of being teachers and leaders. The time team leaders are given varies from school to school, as does the workload and degree of responsibilities.
- 6) Compensation for the team leaders should be revisited as often as teacher compensation is, depending on budget and contract schedules. Workload and responsibility should be considered accordingly.

Recommendations for Further Study

The researcher recommends the following areas for further study, based on the data obtained during the course of this study:

- 1) The literature suggests that further research is needed to explore the distributed leadership process as perceived by team members, as opposed to the sole focus being on the viewpoints of only the highest members of the leadership team (Angelle & DeHart, 2011; Northouse, 2012). Therefore, this study focused on team leaders' perspectives. However, conducting interviews with the principals associated with the schools mentioned in this study would allow the researcher to obtain a more inclusive picture of the distributed leadership team within the middle school setting.
- 2) There are many other types of teacher leadership roles that future research could learn from by inviting a broader range of participants such as learning facilitators, instructional coaches, and mentors.
- 3) Exploring how team leaders are trained in leadership strategies would be a valuable study to determine if these trainings have an impact on the effectiveness of the team leader, as a facilitator of a team.
- 4) Exploring how team leaders are trained in data analysis would be a valuable study to determine if these trainings have an impact on the effectiveness of the team leader, as a leader of data driven instructional techniques.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to give the teacher leaders a voice in defining their role as members of the distributed leadership team within the middle school setting. Team leaders are valuable members of the distributed leadership model. Their perceived impact on the distributed

leadership process within the middle school setting is substantial. When talking about the day-to-day needs of running a middle school one participant shared, “I think the team leader is the person that can really make things happen because they are there every day and can facilitate that to be a strong aspect of middle school.” The involvement level of these teacher leaders within their school community demonstrates how committed they are to participating in true, positive, transformative change.

Participants shared experiences demonstrative of their ability to be flexible, supportive and determined in order to successfully lead their teams. While mentioning strengths of the position such as being involved, running regular meetings, acting as a mentor for a new teacher or a representative of their team, the sense of empowerment and importance was evident. Even when team leaders shared suggestions for improvement in terms of professional needs such as more appropriate professional training, increased compensation, increased time in the schedule, and clarification of certain job role expectations team leaders were professional and respectful. They understand their role fully in that they did not struggle to clearly identify these strengths and weaknesses of their position as a key element of the distributed leadership model within the middle school setting.

Distributed leadership models work best when leaders of all levels are flexible, and able to step forward or step back to allow the strengths of all members to benefit each situation most appropriately. Principals who are attentive, communicative and supportive of their team leaders in their leadership role tend to create a more successful distributed leadership team (Fullan, 2014). Team leaders participating in this study who reported a positive relationship with their principal also expressed positive feelings towards their own involvement as members of the distributed leadership team within their middle school setting. Teachers who were unable to

speak to their principal as a key influence on their self-perception of their own leadership role were more likely to point out the professional needs of the position. Similarly, team leaders describing their teams as well-functioning suggested that their responsibility levels were not excessive; while team leaders representing teams with more challenging social dynamics felt an increase in responsibility.

This study provided participants with a platform for sharing their perceptions about how their role influences the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting. School district personnel, particularly those in middle schools, can use these findings to make informed decisions on developing criteria for the position of team leader and how to most appropriately provide learning experiences for existing team leaders. Middle schools are an appropriate academic community to focus on increasing the efficiency of the important and influential team leader position, as most middle schools in the United States already adopt the team structure model, with teams of cross discipline teachers sharing responsibility of the same group of students (Grenda, 2014). Therefore, this study adds to the field of leadership by providing insight from the teacher leaders themselves on their perceptions of how their role influences the distributed leadership process within the middle school setting.

References

- Angelle, P. S., & DeHart, C. A. (2011). Teacher perceptions of teacher leadership: Examining differences by experience, degree, and position. *NASSP Bulletin*, 95(2), 141-160.
- American Psychological Association. (2002). Glossary of psychological terms. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/research/action/glossary.aspx?tab=16>
- Avey, J. B., Richmond, F. L., & Nixon, D. R. (2012). Leader positivity and follower creativity: An experimental analysis. *Journal Of Creative Behavior*, 46(2), 99-118.
- Avidov-Ungar, O., Friedman, I., & Olshtain, E. (2014). Empowerment amongst teachers holding leadership positions. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 20(6), 704-720.
- Aydin, A., Sarier, Y., & Uysal, S. (2013). The effect of school principals & leadership styles on teachers & organizational commitment and job satisfaction. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 13(2), 806-811.
- Bambrick-Santoyo, P. (2013). Stone Soup: The teacher leader's contribution. *Educational Leadership*, 71(2), 46-49.
- Barile, J. P., Donohue, D. K., Anthony, E. R., Baker, A. M., Weaver, S. R., & Henrich, C. C. (2012). Teacher-student relationship climate and school outcomes: Implications for educational policy initiatives. *Journal Of Youth and Adolescence*, 41(3), 256-267.
- Barth, R. (2007). The teacher leader. *Uncovering teacher leaders*, 9-36.
- The Belmont Report | HHS.gov*. (1979). Retrieved from <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.html#xinform>
- Bennis, Warren G.; Nanus, Burt (2012). *Leaders: The strategies for taking charge* (Collins business essentials). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.
- Black, G. (2010). Correlational analysis of servant leadership and school climate. *Catholic*

Education: A Journal Of Inquiry and Practice, 13(4), 437-466.

Blake, R. R., & Mouton, J. S. (1981). Management by grid principles or situationalism:

Which? *Group and Organization Studies*, 6(4), 439-55.

Bogler, R., & Somech, A. (2004). Influence of teacher empowerment on teachers'

organizational commitment, professional commitment and organizational citizenship

behavior in schools. *Teaching & Teacher Education: An International Journal Of*

Research and Studies, 20(3), 277-289.

The Bolman, Lee G.; Deal, Terrence E. (2013). Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and

leadership (Jossey-Bass Business & Management Series) Wiley. Kindle Edition.

Brown, Michael Jacoby (2007). Building powerful community organizations: A personal guide

to creating groups that can solve problems and change the world . Long Haul Press.

Kindle Edition.

Buskey, F. C. (2014). Servants, managers and monkeys: New perspectives on leadership.

International Journal Of Leadership In Education, 17(1), 123-129.

Christensen, Clayton M.; Jeff Dyer; Hal Gregersen (2011). The innovator's DNA: Mastering the

five skills of disruptive innovators. Harvard Business Review Press. Kindle Edition.

Collie, R. J., Shapka, J. D., & Perry, N. E. (2012). School climate and social-emotional learning:

Predicting teacher stress, job satisfaction, and teaching efficacy. *Journal Of Educational*

Psychology, 104(4), 1189-1204.

Conger, J. (2006). Developing the individual leader. In J.V. Gallos (Ed.), *Organization*

development reader (pp. 681-703). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Connecticut State Department of Education. (2013). SDE: Data-driven decision-making & data

teams. Retrieved from <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=321744>

- Creanor, L. (2014). Raising the Profile: An institutional case study of embedding scholarship and innovation through distributive leadership. *Innovations In Education and Teaching International*, 51(6), 573-583.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Curry, K. A. (2014). Team leadership: It's not for the faint of heart. *Journal Of Cases In Educational Leadership*, 17(2), 20-40.
- Danielson, C. (2006). Teacher leadership that strengthens professional practice. Alexandria, VA, USA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development (ASCD). Retrieved from <http://www.ebrary.com>
- DeAngelis, K. J., & Presley, J. B. (2011). Teacher qualifications and school climate: examining their interrelationship for school improvement. *Leadership and Policy In Schools*, 10(1), 84-120.
- Devos, G., Tuytens, M., & Hulpia, H. (2014). Teachers' organizational commitment: Examining the mediating effects of distributed leadership. *American Journal Of Education*, 120(2), 205-231.
- Dyer, J., Gregerson, H., & Christenson, C. (2011) The innovator's DNA: Mastering the five skills of disruptive innovators. New York, NY: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Ediger, M. (2014). The changing role of the school principal. *College Student Journal*, 48(2), 265-267.
- Flores, M. (2004). The impact of school culture and leadership on new teachers' learning in the workplace. *International Journal Of Leadership In Education*, 7(4), 297-318.
- Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces: Probing the depth of educational reform*. London; New York:

- Falmer Press.
- Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Fullan, M. (2010). *All Systems Go: The change imperative for whole system reform*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. Retrieved from <http://www.ebrary.com>
- Fullan, M. (2011). *Six Secrets of Change: What the best leaders do to help their organizations Survive and Thrive*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Retrieved from <http://www.ebrary.com>
- Fullan, M. (2014). *The principal: Three keys to maximizing impact*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Gale, J. J., & Bishop, P. A. (2014). The work of effective middle grades principals: Responsiveness and relationship. *RMLE Online: Research In Middle Level Education*, 37(9).
- Greenwich Public Schools: District Information. (2015). Retrieved from <http://www.greenwickschools.org/page.cfm?p=59>
- Grenda, J. P., & Hackmann, D. G. (2014). Advantages and challenges of distributing leadership in middle-level schools. *NASSP Bulletin*, 98(1), 53-74.
- Gronn, P. (2000). Distributed properties: A new architecture for leadership. *Educational Management & Administration*, 28(3), 317-38.
- Harris, A. (2003). Teacher leadership as distributed leadership: Heresy, fantasy or possibility? *School Leadership & Management*, 23(3), 313-24.
- Harris, A., & Muijs, D. (2004). *Improving schools through teacher leadership*. Berkshire, GBR: McGraw-Hill Education. Retrieved from <http://www.ebrary.com>
- Hawkins, P. (2014). *Leadership team coaching : Developing collective transformational*

- leadership (2nd Edition). London, GBR: Kogan Page Ltd.. Retrieved from <http://www.ebrary.com>
- Helterbran, V. R. (2010). Teacher leadership: Overcoming "I am just a teacher" syndrome. *Education, 131*(2), 363-371.
- Hersey, P. and Blanchard, K. H. (1977). Management of organizational behavior: Utilizing human resources (3rd ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. H. (1982). Leadership style: Attitudes and behaviors. *Training and Development Journal, 36*(5), 50-52.
- Hoffman, L. L., Hutchinson, C. J., & Reiss, E. (2009). On improving school climate: Reducing reliance on rewards and punishment. *International Journal Of Whole Schooling, 5*(1), 13-24.
- Jones, J., & Earley, P. (2009). Leadership development in schools. In Davies, B. Essentials of school leadership. (pp.166-182). London, GBR: SAGE Publications Ltd.
Retrieved from <http://www.ebrary.com>
- Katzenmeyer, M., & Moller, G., (2001) Awakening the sleeping giant. Helping teachers develop as leaders. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Kelley, R. C., Thornton, B., & Daugherty, R. (2005). Relationships between measures of leadership and school climate. *Education, 126*(1), 17.
- Kilinc, A. Ç. (2014). Examining the relationship between teacher leadership and school climate. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice, 14*(5), 1729-1742.
- Kotter, John P. (2012). *Leading change, with a new preface by the author*. Harvard Business Review Press. Kindle Edition.
- Kouzes, J. & Posner, B. (2006). Enlist others. In J.V. Gallos (Ed.), *Organization development*

- reader* (pp. 518-539). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lummis, B., & Center for Collaborative, E. (2001). *Guide to Curriculum Development. Turning Points: Transforming Middle Schools. Center For Collaborative Education.*
- Lukacs, K. S., & Galluzzo, G. R. (2014). Beyond empty vessels and bridges: Toward defining teachers as the agents of school change. *Teacher Development, 18*(1), 100-106.
- Main, K. (2012). Effective middle school teacher teams: A ternary model of interdependency rather than a catch phrase. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 18*(1), 75-88.
- Mayer, A. P., Donaldson, M. L., LeChasseur, K., Welton, A. D., & Cobb, C. D. (2013). Negotiating site-based management and expanded teacher decision making: A case study of six urban schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 49*(5), 695-731.
- Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass Publications.
- Mirvis, P., & Gunning, L. (2006). In J.V. Gallos (Ed.), *Organization development reader* (pp. 709-729). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mowday, Steers & Porter. (1979). The measurement of organizational commitment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 14*(2), 224-247.
- Neumerski, C. M. (2013). Rethinking instructional leadership, a review: What do we know about principal, teacher, and coach instructional leadership, and where should we go from here?. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 49*(2), 310-347.
- Northouse, P. (2012). *Leadership: Theory and practice.* SAGE Publications. Kindle Edition.
- Parker, G. (2006). What makes a team effective or ineffective? In J.V. Gallos (Ed.), *Organization development reader* (pp. 656-680). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Petzko, V. N., Clark, D. C., Valentine, J. W., Hackmann, D. G., Nori, J. R., & Lucas, S. E.

- (2002). Leaders and leadership in middle level schools. *NASSP Bulletin*, 86(631), 3-15.
- Sage Publications, i., & Lavrakas, P. J. (2008). *Encyclopedia of survey research methods*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. Kindle Edition.
- Shields, C. M. (2010). Transformative leadership: Working for equity in diverse contexts. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 46(4), 558-589.
- Smylie, M. A., & Denny, J. W. (1990). Teacher leadership: Tensions and ambiguities in organizational perspective. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 26(3), 235-59.
- Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2001). Investigating school leadership practice: A distributed perspective. *Educational Researcher*, 30(3), 23-28.
- Spillane, J. P. (2006). *Distributed leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Stone-Johnson, C. (2014). Responsible leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 50(4), 645-674.
- Transcription hub: Service on the cloud. (2015). Retrieved from www.transcriptionhub.com/Education
- Van Houtte, M., & Van Maele, D. (2011). The black box revelation: In search of conceptual clarity regarding climate and culture in school effectiveness research. *Oxford Review Of Education*, 37(4), 505-524.
- Wheatley, M. (2006). *Leadership and the new science: Discovering order in a chaotic world*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers. Kindle Edition.
- Wilson, D. (2004). The interface of school climate and school connectedness and relationships with aggression and victimization. *Journal of School Health*, 74(7), 293-299.

Zullig, K. J., Huebner, E., & Patton, J. M. (2011). Relationships among school climate domains and school satisfaction. *Psychology In The Schools, 48*(2), 133-145.

Appendix A

Demographic Survey Questions for Team Leaders

1. Coded identifier in place of name:
2. School:
3. Male or female:
4. Age range:
5. Number of years teaching:
6. Number of years teaching in this district:
7. Grade level you teach:
8. Subject (s) you teach:
9. Grade level you lead:
10. How many teachers are on the team, which you lead?
11. How long have you officially held the position of team leader?

Appendix B

Interview Questions for: *Team Leader*

- 1) The day you first realized you were going to take on the team leader role... Can you describe that day for me? *The setting, the situation, the factors impacting your decision?* **Q 2**
- 2) Tell me about the types of leadership activities you take part in as a team leader? **Q 1**
- 3) How have your responsibilities here at school changed from when you were simply a teacher, to now, now that you are a team leader? **Q 1, Q 2, Q 3**
- 4) Can you describe an experience when you may have learned something new about your own leadership style from holding this leadership position? **Q 2**
- 5) Can you share a story with me about a particular challenge you have faced as team leader? *I'd really like to know the situation, circumstances and possible solution in connection to this story.* **Q 2**
- 6) How has holding this leadership position influenced your relationships with other teachers who you work with here at (school)? **Q 1**
- 7) Can you suggest a particular type of training or professional activity that you feel would benefit teacher leaders most, as members of the school leadership team?
- 8) If I were interviewing your principal about your role as team leader, how do you feel *they* would describe your influence on the school leadership processes? **Q 3**
- 9) And if I were to ask a teacher on your team, who is not serving in a leadership role, that same question; how do you feel *they* would describe your influence on the school leadership processes? **Q 3**
- 10) Let's imagine you are at a conference for teacher leaders. A new principal is there considering implementing a teacher leadership model in his school. He is asks you for your opinion on what can be expected of a teacher leader, as a member of his leadership team. What would you suggest to this principal who is shaping this new role for the teachers at his school? **Q 1, Q 2, Q 3**

Q 1) *In what ways might team leaders feel differently about their school's leadership processes since they have become an official leader within their school's organizational structure?*

Q 2) *What workplace experiences have been significant in terms of shaping the team leaders' perceptions of the distributed leadership process within their school setting?*

Q 3) *How does being in a position of leadership impact the team leaders' feelings towards interactions with other teachers who are not in an official position of leadership?*

Appendix C

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Project Title: Teacher Leadership's Influence on the Distributed Leadership Process within the Middle School Setting as Perceived by the Teacher Leaders Themselves.

Principal Investigator(s): *Katherine Susan Garand*

Faculty Advisor: *Dr. Steven Moskowitz*

Introduction:

- Please read this form, you may also request that the form is read to you. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information about this research study, and if you choose to participate, document your decision.
- You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study, now, during or after the project is complete. You can take as much time as you need to decide whether or not you want to participate. Your participation is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

- This study is intended to explore the perspective of the teacher leader towards their role within the leadership system of their school.
- The researcher has discovered findings, which suggest that the voice of the teacher leader is lacking in previous studies on school leadership team, which involve teachers in the leadership process. Examples of these leadership teams include distributed or shared leadership structures.

Who will be in this study?

- To narrow down the focus of this study, teachers who hold the position of team leader are being asked to participate in this study.
- The researcher is a learning facilitator at one of the middle schools and therefore, is excluding this particular leadership position from this study in an effort to avoid bias responses to interview questions.
- You must be at least 18 years of age to participate.
- There will be approximately 5-6 participants during group interview sessions.
- 16 Participants will be invited to interview independently (This is the total number of team leaders within all three middle schools).

What will I be asked to do?

- Participants will be asked to respond to ten survey questions to collect demographic information.
- Participants will be asked to participate in an individual interview, which should last approximately 25 minutes. These interviews can be scheduled in person or, if need be, over the phone.

What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?

- Individual interviews will be kept confidential.
- No participant names will be used associating them with their responses to survey or interview questions.

What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?

- By participating in this study participants are helping to identify possible roadblocks or barriers that may exist to hinder the true potential of the team leader position as a member of a distributed leadership team. This information could be used to assist school administrators in developing meaningful professional development for team leaders.

What will it cost me?

- This study will not require any type of cost owed by participants at any time.

How will my privacy be protected?

- During interview sessions only the researcher and participant will be present.
- Information obtained during this study will be used only for the purposes of this study.
- No participant names will be used within this study.

How will my data be kept confidential?

- Survey information will be kept confidential.
- Individual interviews will be kept confidential.
- No participant names will be used associating them with their responses to survey or interview questions.
- A copy of your signed consent form will be maintained by the principal investigator for at least 3 years after the project is complete before it is destroyed. The consent forms will be stored in a secure location that only members of the research team will have access to and will not be affiliated with any data obtained during the project.
- Members of the focus group will be asked not to repeat what is discussed but the researcher cannot ensure that they will respect other participants' privacy.
- Audiotape will be used to record all interview sessions. These recordings will be transcribed and used only by the researcher for the purposes of this study.
- Research findings will be provided to participants at the conclusion of this study as requested by the participants.

What are my rights as a research participant?

- Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your current or future relations with the University or the Greenwich Public Schools.
- You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason.
- If you choose not to participate there is no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive. You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason. If you choose to withdraw from the research there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
- You may choose not to participate.

Whom may I contact with questions?

- The researcher conducting this study is Katherine Susan Garand. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact her at 413 27 6789 or kgarand@une.edu.
- If you choose to participate in this research study and believe you may have suffered a research related injury, please contact the Faculty Advisor, Dr. Steven Moskowitz at 860 631 7838 or smoskowitz@une.edu.
- If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Olgun Guvench, M.D. Ph.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4171 or irb@une.edu.

Will I receive a copy of this consent form?

- You will be given a copy of this consent form.

Participant's Statement

I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.

Participant's signature or
Legally authorized representative

Date

Printed name

Researcher's Statement

The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

Researcher's signature

Date

Printed name

Appendix D: UNE IRB Exemption Form**UNIVERSITY OF
NEW ENGLAND**Institutional Review Board
Olgun Guvench, Chair**Biddeford Campus**
11 Hills Beach Road
Biddeford, ME 04005
(207)602-2244 T
(207)602-5905 F**Portland Campus**
716 Stevens Avenue
Portland, ME 04103

To: Katherine Susan Garand

Cc: Steven Moscovitz

From: Olgun Guvench, Ph.D.

Date: December 8, 2015

Project # & Title: 112515-013, Teacher Leadership's Influence on the Distributed Leadership Process Within the Middle School Setting as Perceived by the Teacher Leaders Themselves (Initial)

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects has reviewed the above captioned project, and has determined that the proposed work is exempt from IRB review and oversight as defined by 45 CFR 46.101 (b)(2).

Additional IRB review and approval is not required for this protocol as submitted. If you wish to change your protocol at any time, you must first submit the changes for review.

Please contact Olgun Guvench at (207) 221-4171 or oguvench@une.edu with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Olgun Guvench", written in a cursive style.

Olgun Guvench, M.D., Ph.D.
IRB Chair

IRB#: 112515-013
Submission Date: 11/23/15
Status: Exempt, 45 CFR 46.101 (b)(2)
Status Date: **12/08/15**