Principals’ Understandings and Efforts Supporting Teacher Leadership

By

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TEACHER LEADERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS AND SUPPORTS

Abstract

Teacher leadership has been garnering increased interest from educational reformation efforts to increase accountability and raise test-scores. As a result, a large amount of extant literature relies on empirical evidence and positivist paradigms. This research takes the position that teacher leadership should be valued for other reasons, namely as part of teachers’ capacity to support academic and social learning. As such, this research aims to understand how principals conceptualize teacher leadership and how this informs their efforts to support it. Four, semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals of elementary schools around the Greater Toronto Area. Four themes emerged: 1) principals had practical conceptualizations of teacher leadership, 2) principals supported teacher leadership as an informal practice, 3) principals experienced challenges and opportunities in inclusive efforts to support teacher leadership, and 4) teacher leadership as coming to know oneself. These findings further understanding of teacher leadership as situated, and informed by experiences and meanings.

Keywords: teacher leadership, principals, development, habitus, situated
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ......................................................................................................................... 2  

Acknowledgements .................................................................................................... 3  

Preface: My Journey as Teacher-Researcher .............................................................. 7  

Chapter 1: Introduction ............................................................................................... 10  
  1.1 Research Context .............................................................................................. 10  
  1.2 Research Problem ............................................................................................. 11  
  1.3 Research Purpose ............................................................................................. 12  
  1.4 Research Questions .......................................................................................... 13  
  1.5 Reflexive Positioning Statement ...................................................................... 13  
  1.6 Preview of the Whole ....................................................................................... 14  

Chapter 2: Literature Review ..................................................................................... 16  
  2.0 Introduction ....................................................................................................... 16  
  2.1 The Significance of Teacher Leadership ........................................................... 16  
  2.2 Conceptualizing Teacher Leadership in Theory and Practice ....................... 18  
    2.2.1 Alternate conceptualizations of teacher leadership in theory .................... 18  
    2.2.2 Evolving conceptualizations of teacher leadership in practice ................. 21  
  2.3 The Theory and Practice of Supporting Teacher Leadership Development .......... 22  
    2.3.1 Developing teacher leadership in theory .................................................. 22  
    2.3.2 Current politics and programs contextualizing teacher leadership development in Ontario ........................................................................................................ 23  
  2.4 Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 27  

Chapter 3: Methodology .............................................................................................. 29
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.0 Introduction</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Approach to Research</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Procedure</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Instruments of Data Collection</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Participants</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1 Sampling criteria</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2 Sample size</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.3 Sampling recruitment</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.4 Participant biographies</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Data Collection and Analysis</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Ethical Review Procedures</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Limitations and Strengths</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 Conclusion</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Research Findings</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0 Introduction</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Practical Conceptualizations of Teacher Leadership</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1 Teachers exercising leadership in the classroom</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2 Teacher leadership features strong relationships, strong</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collaboration, and passion</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.3 Situated nuances of teacher leadership surrounding student voice</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Principals Supporting Teacher Leadership as Informal Practice</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1 Principals fostering teachers’ identities as leaders</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2 Principals providing mentorship as they were mentored</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3 Principals offer novel opportunities to support teacher leadership</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Challenges and Opportunities for Principals in Supporting Teacher Leadership .......... 50
    4.3.1 Balancing teacher leadership with other teachers’ interests .................. 50
    4.3.2 Recognizing teachers’ leadership styles to support leadership development .... 52
4.3 Teacher Leadership as Coming to Know Oneself ........................................ 53

Chapter 5: Implications ..................................................................................... 57

5.0 Overview of the Chapter ............................................................................. 57
5.1 Overview of Key Findings and their Significance ........................................ 57
5.2 Implications ............................................................................................... 59
    5.2.1 Broad implications: Giving name to teacher leadership, its related practices, and its evolving role in schools ................................................................. 59
    5.2.2 Narrow implications: Evolving identity as a teacher-leader and teacher-researcher teaching from the heart .......................................................... 60
5.3 Recommendations ..................................................................................... 61
5.4 Areas for Further Research ....................................................................... 62
5.5 Concluding Comments ............................................................................... 63

References ....................................................................................................... 65

Appendix A: Letter of Consent ........................................................................ 70

Appendix B: Interview Protocol .................................................................... 72

Introduction .................................................................................................... 72
Interview Questions ......................................................................................... 72
Preface: My Journey as Teacher-Researcher

So what? I’ve heard worse stories. So have you. Open today’s paper and you’ll find two or three that make mine sound like a Disney Trailer… So what makes my father’s desertion unusual? Absolutely nothing.

Matter of fact, the only people who have any interest in either of these stories are my brother and me. I tell the stories not to play on your sympathies but to suggest how stories can control our lives, for there is a part of me that has never been able to move past these stories… (King, 2011, p. 8-9).

To my pride’s horror, King (2011) called out my prejudices with this passage. To my heart’s delight, I finally began to understand what had been holding me back for so long.

Why research? I had asked myself this as I prepared an application for the Master of Teaching program. I had been well exposed to research in the field of biochemistry where it was made very clear to me that research culminates in publishing novel and relevant results. Doing so endows grants and reputation, leading to status and success as a researcher. So, with my application deadline looming, I secretly came to the conclusion that teachers must engage in research for status and success as well.

This conclusion set me up to struggle. For success as a biochemist, one must choose the research topic carefully so that it will yield novel and relevant results. So, I perused the literature to see what an appropriate topic might be. I observed a tension, where “the more abstract your work, the higher your status in the academic hierarchy, and the more useful and applicable to practice your work, the lower your status” (p. 155) as Zeichner (1995) describes it. I was so confused: if abstract work is the equivalent of success, then how can I create good quality
research from interviews with educators which ask about their experiences in the everyday? I could not conceive of how I would derive a novel and relevant truth.

Overcoming the philosophical assumptions and prejudices that underpinned this view has been a journey over the last two years, but I can identify critical experiences which have spurred my growth. In an introductory class with our instructor Rodney Handelsman, he said that “being able to name [our] deep assumptions opens a world of possibilities.” I held onto this thought tightly because until then, I had struggled to understand philosophical assumptions, so I could not imagine them opening a “world of possibilities” in my research, let alone in the daily grind of being a teacher.

I was still holding onto this thought when I happened upon a blog post written by a First Nations doctoral candidate. I regret that I cannot retrieve the article and award it the citation it deserves. The author described the hurt and outrage she felt when a professor identified the origins of a certain line of thought in Western science, when in fact First Nations people had long held that belief. She then used this as an example of ontological and epistemological prejudices in academia, and how they contributed to a form of post-colonialism.

This was a defining moment for me. I thought to myself: I do not want to contribute to colonial legacy! I want to accept and honour this individual’s story, because she experienced it. Stories are powerful, because as King (2011) describes, stories can control our lives. This individual’s small story illustrated to me how philosophical assumptions manifest and permeate into daily life in impactful ways, and this profoundly moved me.

Like our instructor had said it would, being able to name my assumptions opened up a world of possibilities. Giving name to my assumptions allowed me to identify exactly what I wanted to let go of—a positivistic perspective that there is one apprehendable truth— and replace it
with a more constructivist lens that recognizes multiple, constructed realities with created findings (Guba, & Lincoln, 1994). In my view, doing so honours others, which is morally important to me and, as such, a very compelling force.

I share my shift in philosophical assumptions because it reflects growth in my thinking as I have come to understand knowledge in new ways. It was an unintended “finding” of this project which I believe deserves to be elaborated upon not only because it shaped this research project, but because it will be carried forward in me as a teacher, a community member, and an active member of society.

I now identify philosophical assumptions everywhere I go: at the doctor’s office when he dismisses my experiential knowledge, on the news when I hear a journalist declaring they have the singular truth, or in my conversations with marginalized individuals who have incredible stories that are not socially valued. I especially see philosophical assumptions at play in the classroom as they manifest in students’ comments, responses, and ways of understanding and learning. I have found that oftentimes, when I feel challenged by a student, it is because their thinking challenges my philosophical assumptions. Recognizing this, I no longer feel threatened and I can instead mediate an understanding between us, and this allows me to respect students’ agency in new ways. So far, I believe this has been a powerful force in helping students to grow and has contributed to my practice as a teacher-leader and anti-oppressive educator. Mediating students’ assumptions with my own continues to grow my understandings of myself, my students and the world, and in this way, I feel I also have begun to embark on my journey of teacher-researcher. This research project has been critical to developing this mindset.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Context

Recent conceptualizations of teacher leadership have offered unparalleled opportunities for teachers to contribute to student learning as skilled professionals. These conceptualizations have constructed teacher leadership as action that:

- ties school and community together on behalf of learning, and that advances social sustainability and quality of life for a community… Teacher leadership facilitates principled action to achieve whole-school success. It applies the distinctive power of teaching to shape meaning for children, youth and adults.
- And it contributes to long-term, enhanced quality of community life (Crowther, Kaagen, Ferguson & Han, 2002, p. 27).

The incredible potential ascribed to teacher leadership has consequently led to its increased prevalence in educational literature and professional language (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2011). At the surface, this interest has appeared positive with emphasis on student learning. Critical analysis, however, has brought to light that what teacher leadership entails and to what ends it serves are severely influenced by opposing sociopolitical ideologies (Moos, 2013; Lingard & Christie, 2003; Lingard, Hayes, Mills, & Christie, 2003).

Neoliberal influences in the education sector have pointed to teacher leadership as a means of accountability amidst reformation movements (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2011). In this paradigm, teacher leadership represents increased efficiency and effectiveness for increased profitability in the “educational enterprise” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2011, p. 2; Gunter, 2003).

Alternatively, progressive views on teacher leadership value it as an important factor in developing skill and capacity which contribute to deep academic and social learning for students.
These opposing interests warrant closer examination of teacher leadership in practice, and particularly in Ontario, where the concept has become more prevalent in resources and programming offered by teachers’ governing bodies.

1.2 Research Problem

The pervasion of neoliberal influence into the field educational leadership has had two main effects on literature concerning teacher leadership. Firstly, a large degree of literature examines teacher leadership for the purpose of increasing efficiency and effectiveness. It relies upon positivist and empirical means such as standardized test results and questionnaires to describe teacher leadership and how effective it is (Gunter, 2003; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). This is problematic for teacher leaders who are not interested in the reformation purposes of teacher leadership, and for those who do not hold positivist philosophical assumptions. Secondly, a large amount of literature on teacher leadership describes it in generic managerial terms devoid of context (Lingard & Christie, 2003). This is also problematic for teacher leaders who hold more constructivist philosophical assumptions and view leadership as embedded and shaped by its context.

As a result of these focuses in extant literature, the question of how teacher leadership is developed is largely overlooked (Lambert, 2003; York-Barr, 2004). Teacher leadership is often described as a set of practices, but little description explains how teacher leaders came to take on those practices. What is further curious is how teacher leadership can develop within the hierarchical relationships of public education, which have been described as detrimental to the cultivation of teacher leadership (Lambert, 2003; York-Barr, 2004). This raises further questions on how principals’ conceptualizations of teacher leadership inform their efforts to support its development.
1.3 Research Purpose

In light of the hegemonic nature of theoretical literature on teacher leadership which perpetuates neoliberal agendas, this research begins to fill the gap in scholarship which draws from non-hegemonic paradigms (Lingard et al., 2003; Lingard & Christie, 2003). The goal of this research is thusly to offer a practical understanding of cultivating teacher leadership which values its situatedness in social contexts.

To do so, this research examines the development of teacher leadership from principals’ perspectives. Principals’ perspectives are valuable because they have worked with a large amount of teachers, including those developing their leadership practice. Principals must also have demonstrated leadership as teachers in order to have become principals (Ministry of Education, 2013). Additionally, by examining teacher leadership development from principals’ perspectives, this research will gain insight into a hierarchical relationship which can pose a major challenge in the cultivation of teacher leadership (Lambert, 2003; York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Gunter, 2003).

On the basis that leadership thinking and practices are contextually driven (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990 as cited in Moos, 2013; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003), this research first examines how a sampling of principals conceptualizes teacher leadership. Then, this study will examine how the sample of principals supports teacher leadership development in practice. This is in keeping with Gunter’s (2000) observation that “thinking with Bourdieu means acknowledging that theory is in practice and practice in theory” (p. 630). It also allows for a contextualized approach to analysis which Lingard and Christie (2003) stress in order to move beyond trait, circumstantial, and transformational leadership theories stemming from business models.
The main thrust of this research is to educate myself as a novice educator who hopes to richly contribute to her school community with leadership. I also aim to share my findings with other novice and practicing teachers so that they might benefit from an understanding of themselves as teacher-leaders. Additionally, as an exercise of inquiry this research serves to deepen my understanding of qualitative research practices and their underpinning philosophy.

1.4 Research Questions

The guiding question to this research was: how does a sample of principals’ understandings of teacher leadership inform their efforts to support teacher leadership? The subsidiary questions were:

- How do these principals conceptualize teacher leadership?
- How do these principals support the development of teachers as educational leaders?
- What challenges and opportunities do these principals perceive as they support teacher leadership?

1.5 Reflexive Positioning Statement

I identify two major factors that contribute to my interest in teacher leadership and contribute to my lens as researcher of this project: my personal interest in leadership, and my passion for social justice.

My personal interest in leadership is a byproduct of my desire to bring about the best possible outcome in matters of importance to me. This almost always occurs in collaboration with others, which often requires leadership. Through a wide variety of experiences –large and small, paid and unpaid, formal and informal –I had begun to develop my own leadership practice prior to conducting this research. My understanding was largely acquired experientially through
much practice, many mistakes and continual reflection. For this reason, Bourdieu’s writing on the inextricability of leadership theory and practice resonate deeply with me.

The other factor which contributes to my interest in teacher leadership is my passion for social justice and anti-oppressive education. I volunteered for several years in an elementary school serving a large proportion of low-socioeconomic status and racialized students. As a social justice-minded educator, it is my view that it is crucial these students are successful in high quality education so that they are equipped to navigate and negotiate society. I was consequently very disappointed to observe many practices (or lack thereof) that did not seem to engender high quality education. I began noticing, however, that some teachers stood out with exceptional practice and they were virtually unmoved by negative influences around them. This initiated my interest in the concept of teacher leadership. As I have begun to engage in practice as a social justice and anti-oppressive educator more formally, I have often sensed isolation. This reinforces my interest in the role I can play as a teacher lead to ensure that all students are successful in high quality education.

1.6 Preview of the Whole

In response to the research questions presented in this chapter, I proceed to offer a literature review of teacher leadership as a field of research, theory and practice in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology of this research project, namely as qualitative inquiry drawing from phenomenological approaches involving a small number of semi-structured interviews. In Chapter 4, I present the findings of this project which are inevitably coloured by my lens as researcher. In Chapter 5, extend these findings to broad implications relating to the educational community, as well as narrow implications relating to my ever-evolving practice.
This points towards recommendations, areas for future research and concluding remarks on my journey of as teacher-leader and teacher-researcher.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I review extant leadership on teacher leadership and its development. I begin by contextualizing the significance of teacher leadership within the broader context of educational leadership to demonstrate how it is shaped by competing sociopolitical ideologies. I continue to demonstrate how these ideologies influenced extant literature and practical conceptualizations of teacher leadership. Finally, I describe how teacher leadership is developed in theory and in practice and points toward the current area of research.

2.1 The Significance of Teacher Leadership

The concept of teacher leadership is increasingly popular in educational literature and professional language, but views on what it entails and to what end it serves vary due to underlying and opposing sociopolitical ideologies (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Lingard et al., 2003). Therefore, to critically engage with teacher leadership discourse it is important to situate it within the broader context of educational leadership and policy (Lingard, Moos).

Since the 1980s, educational policy has become increasingly influenced by economic ideologies to the point that in some ways, it is now considered a sub-set of economic policy (Moos, 2003; Lingard & Christie, 2003). Neoliberal policy has refocused public education on preparing students to compete in the workforce of globalized markets. It also transferred ideologies of “generic management skills, quantified performance targets... [and] a preference for private ownership” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) which have thusly shaped the aims of teacher leadership.

Teachers are pressured to meet, and to help students meet, performance targets centering on standardized testing (McNeil, 2000). This has led to reformation movements observed in
nations such as Canada, the USA, the UK, and Australia (Pounder, 2006). Pressure is applied to teachers through accountability measures, emphasis on professionalization, and the comparison of standardized test results (Moos, 2003, McNeil, 2000). A large degree of extant literature on teacher leadership has these aims at its core.

From neoliberal perspectives, teacher leadership entails increased efficiency and effectiveness in the development of “educational enterprise” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2011, p. 2). By extension then, the development of teacher leadership is a better investment for improving student outcomes (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013). It can be difficult for this to materialize, however, with pervasive goals to “yield a short-term profit with quick returns for its investors” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013, p. 36).

Comparatively, progressive ideologies of education purpose schooling for more than academic achievement as workforce preparation. At the most basic level, learning involves academic and social dimensions (McNeil, 2000; Moos, 2003). Public education is viewed as critical to social learning because it is one of the few remaining spaces where “children from all parts of society are brought together in the public school community because they need to know, respect, and acknowledge each other” (Moos, 2003). In this way, education is complex and involves dimensions which are generally not measured by standardized testing. Further, it is understood that standardized testing often a mechanism of discrimination and marginalization (McNeil, 2000; Gay, 2010). Teaching is therefore valued as complex and technically difficult. Teacher leadership therefore becomes “policies and practices that build up the expertise of teachers individually and collectively to make a difference in the learning and achievement of all students” (Heargraves & Fullan, 2013, p. 37).
2.2 Conceptualizing Teacher Leadership in Theory and Practice

2.2.1 Alternate conceptualizations of teacher leadership in theory

Leadership is an abstract and complex concept which has made it difficult to define throughout time (Lambert, 2003). The definition of teacher leadership is even further elusive because of conflicting, underlying ideologies and because of how relating leadership theory has evolved over time (Lambert, 2003; Silva et al., 2000). Since theoretical literature on teacher leadership itself is limited, it is important to examine extant literature on educational leadership (York-Barr, 2004; Lingard et al., 2003).

Two contemporary leadership theories dominate educational leadership at this point in time: distributed leadership theory, and transformational leadership theory (Pounder, 2006; Harris). Spillane (2006) described distributed leadership as the shared practice between individuals seeking to address organizational issues and problems. According to Spillane (2006), it has two key features: the leader-plus (who) and the practice (how). The leader-plus refers to leadership existing throughout the multiple individuals involved. Leadership is thusly not restricted to hierarchical or formal authority positions. The second feature, practice, refers to the outcome of the individuals’ interactions materializing.

Further, Gronn (2002) distinguishes that distributive leadership can be additive or holistic. Additive approaches involve individuals engage in leadership without taking into account the action of others. Holistic approaches involve when individuals are conscious of each other’s leadership and coordinate their efforts.

Distributed leadership can connote different aims as it has been applied both in the interest of neoliberal and progressive goals. It aligns well with progressive-minded leadership because it represents a more democratic approach which can inclusively build on the skill and
expertise of many teachers. This has led to growing interest in the concept of professional capital, which aims to build teacher skill and capacity (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013). Conversely, distributed leadership has also been applied in efforts to make teachers more efficient and effective.

As Spillane (2006) described that a key feature of distributed leadership is outcome, a large amount of distributed leadership literature examines how teacher leadership can improve empirically-measured student outcomes. In this regard, research is limited and conflicted. A major methodological limitation is that it has heavily relied on quantitative, positivist research paradigms by use of standardized test scores and surveys. As a result, descriptive analysis of how teacher leaders experience and make meaning of distributed leadership constructs is limited.

The other prominent contemporary leadership theory is transformational leadership. Transformational leadership refers to leadership whereby leaders “interact with followers in ways that enhance their creativity and motivation in the organization” (Burns, 1978). It is not necessarily constrained to formal positions of authority and therefore off-limits to teacher leaders, but it generally refers to the efforts of principals to reform teacher practice (Pounder, 2006). In a study in the Netherlands and Canada, Geijsel, Sleegers, Leithwood and Jantzi (2003) that transformational leadership had teacher little effects on teacher commitment to reform. It also relied on empirical evidence and did not take into account the broader historical and sociopolitical contexts that teachers encountered.

Lingard and Christie (2003) critique literature on distributive and transformational leadership as being understandings for educational leadership. That is, leader traits, situations, and practices which are theorized and then applied and investigated in context. They also reflect transference of neoliberal logic through the application of generic managerial strategies (Rizvi &
Lingard, 2010). Conversely, Lingard and Christie (2003) and others (Gunter, 2000, 2003; Moos, 2003) who draw upon the work of Bourdieu prefer understandings of leadership. Understandings of leadership recognize that “theory is in practice and practice in theory” (Gunter, 2000, p. 630).

Bourdieu emphasized the importance of practice because:

The institutional context (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) and the historical and societal background in and against which educational leadership is situated, since leadership thinking and practices, as well as individual and community social capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) are formed by the society, culture and context of which they are a part. They are shaped by policies, discourses and literature, but also by national/local values, traditions, structures and practices (Moos, 2003).

As opposed to positivist paradigms underpinning generic leader trait, circumstance, transformation theories, Bourdieu drew from social constructivist paradigms (Lingard & Christie, 2003). Instead of generic leader archetypes, he used habitus to refer to “the way people internalize social structures and perceive the world… that embody extant social structures” (Lingard & Christie, 2003, p. 4). It may be controlled through reflexivity. Instead of focusing on outcomes, he used the term field to refer to “a structure social space, a field of forces… [that] contains people who dominate and people who are dominated. Constant permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space, which at the same time becomes a space in which the various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 40-41 as cited in Lingard, 2003). Thus, teacher leadership exists in the recursive relationship between habitus and field, the individual leader and their broader social context.
2.2.2 Evolving conceptualizations of teacher leadership in practice

Silva, Gimbert and Nolan (2000) described three waves in the evolution of teacher leadership practice which has widely been referred to over time. The first wave of teacher leadership aligned with the beginnings of education reform movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The practice of teacher leadership was conceptualized around hierarchical leadership with authoritative positions. This led to the creation of roles such as department head, head teacher, master teacher, union representatives for teacher leaders. Their main focus was generating efficiency and effectiveness. Frymier (1987 as cited in Silva et al., 2000) described teachers during this time as “neutered by the bureaucratic routinization of teaching and learning that has grown out of administrative attempts to control schools as places with teachers as deskilled works and students as uniform products” (as cited in Siva, 2000, p. 11).

With this shortcoming, the second wave of leadership shifted more towards capitalizing on teachers’ pedagogical and instructional expertise. It led to the creation of more positions such as team leader, curriculum developer, staff developers, and new teacher mentors. The second wave of leadership still comprised elements of hierarchical authority, but began to recognize the technical skill of teachers. It did not, however, incorporate elements of collaboration. Darling-Hammond (1998) and Shulman (1987) recounted that an unintended result of the second wave was that many teachers still felt controlled because of the reach of teacher leaders’ influence.

The third and last widely cited wave of teacher leadership was significantly more aligned with principles of distributed leadership. Silva et al. (2000) described that teachers would “slide doors open” to collaborate with each other and solve problems. In this way, teachers accomplished what they could not have on their own so as to foster deeper learning for students.
(Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998). As such, the third wave of teacher leadership presents both the leader-plus and outcome features of distributed leadership.

At present, it appears that a large degree of teacher leadership practice is still exercised in line with third wave conceptualizations of teacher leadership. The concept of teacher leadership as part of professional capital how it can be both exercised and developed through professional learning communities is gaining traction. Research on professional learning communities continues to demonstrate is “potential to positively impact teacher knowledge and skills for the ongoing improvement of students learning outcomes” (Hairon, Goh & Chua, 2015). It may yet provide a means to bridge respect for teacher professionalism with improved student outcomes.

2.3 The Theory and Practice of Supporting Teacher Leadership Development

2.3.1 Developing teacher leadership in theory

Extant literature has limited accounts of how teacher leadership is developed (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Lambert, 2003). In their review of two decades of literature on teacher leadership, York-Barr and Duke (2004) compiled a list of suggestions concerning how principals can promote teacher leadership:

- Build school culture conducive to teacher leadership through formal structures and informal behaviours
- Expect leadership and relinquish authority accordingly. Principals should protect teacher leaders from their colleagues, share responsibility for failure and give credit for success
- Redefine their role as principal to the developer of a community of leaders
- Create opportunities for teachers to lead such as through professional learning communities and by providing results-driven professional development
- Foster reflective practice to promote innovation
- Pay attention to change and how it affects relationships
- Offer visible support and frequent reinforcement

This list of recommendations was formulated based on empirical evidence from teacher surveys (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). As such, the exact ways which principals could enact these suggestions is unclear due to lack of qualitative and descriptive data.

Interestingly, the same literature did not present the same sort of recommendations for teacher leaders from principals. It would appear that this is because theoretical literature, or understandings for teacher leadership, is viewed as directly transferable to teachers (Lingard & Christie, 2003). In light of Bourdieu’s social constructivist theories which emphasized the situatedness of leadership in contexts and relationships, understandings of the development of teacher leadership would still be beneficial. Moreover, examining teacher leadership within the context of hierarchical principal-teacher relationships would be insightful since hierarchical relationships can trouble the cultivation of teacher leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Lambert, 2003).

2.3.2 Current politics and programs contextualizing teacher leadership development in Ontario

Sociopolitical climate. As part of understanding teacher leadership in practice, it is important to consider the institutional context as well as the historical and societal background (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Moos, 2003; Lingard & Christie, 2003). Principal-participants in this study practiced in the suburbs of the Greater Toronto Area. As such, there was relative proximity between their schools and governing bodies including the Ontario Ministry of Education, the Ontario Teachers’ Federation, the Ontario College of Teachers, and union head
offices. This study focused on principal of elementary schools, so teachers of these schools belonged to the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO) union. At the time of this study, ETFO was the largest teachers’ union outside of Québec (ETFO Niagara, 2013).

As the largest teachers’ union in Ontario, ETFO represented a formidable force. Following several years of neo-liberal policies resulting in mass teacher layoffs, cut backs in spending, and standardized testing, ETFO organized against the conservative government. They are credited with being a major contributing force to the liberal opposition’s victory in the 2003 election, and several more since then (McCaffrey, 2003). The principal-participants I interviewed were teachers during this era.

In 2007, this tumultuous time was still recent memory. The ETFO president wrote that ETFO had:

- faced a government that had little respect for teachers and worked to undermine public education in this province. The education system has not yet fully recovered from the damage that government did. And while there is a long way to go, we have seen improvements, particularly in the respect shown to teachers and their federations (Noble, 2007).

This study was conducted eight years since then, but teachers’ tension with the Ontario Ministry of Education and provincial government remained. During the time this research was being completed, unions’ collective agreements expired and it took more than one year past expiry for contracts to be re-negotiated. Teachers’ unions engaged in “work-to-rule” action. They were legally prohibited from striking, and instead teachers only did what was required by their contracts. This led to the canceling of standardized testing, fieldtrips, report cards, and
parent-teacher interviews. Principals were responsible to fill all unmet needs during this time, even so far as cleaning schools themselves (ETFO, 2015).

**Available programs supporting teacher leadership.** During the time of this study, several formal opportunities were offered by governing bodies to support teacher leadership. Ontario’s Ministry of Education supported teacher leadership in three ways.

First, it facilitated the Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP) in conjunction with the Ontario Federation of Teachers. The TLLP funded proposals from experienced classroom teachers seeking “peer leadership roles in curriculum, instructional practice, or supporting other teachers” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). Once selected, teachers engaged in self-chosen and self-directed, job-embedded projects. It comprised elements mainly of second wave teacher leadership practice since it had an instructional focus and did not clearly support collaboration between teachers.

The second way the Ministry of Education supported teacher leadership was with the New Teachers Induction Program (NTIP). NTIP intended to capitalize on “mentorship and demonstration classrooms… to ‘deprivatize’ classroom practice” (Teaching Policy and Standards Branch, 2012). Through NTIP, experienced teachers had the opportunity to mentor and coach new teachers. This also had strong elements of second wave teacher leadership practice because it relied on a hierarchical position for teachers to exercised leadership.

Interestingly, in an NTIP resource, teacher leadership is described by the Ministry of Education. It highlights that not all teachers pursue traditional forms of leadership, and instead some pursue “small l” forms. It describes “small l” forms of leadership as:

- Refining classroom practice and knowledge and practice… both formally and informally
- Mentoring teacher candidates, beginning teachers and other colleagues
- Providing teacher leadership within a school (e.g., chair of a grade or subject team)
- Participating in networked learning via communities of practice

(Teaching Policy and Standards Branch, 2012).

The resource also pointed NTIP members toward an online community, Mentoring Moments, so that members could participate in networked learning. This represented more elements of third wave teacher leadership practice, focused more on collaboration and less on top-down initiatives (Teaching Policy and Standards Branch, 2012).

In 2007, the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario reported that funding provided by the provincial government was used to “foster teacher leadership across the program,” but no further information was available on specifics (Noble, 2007). In a later resource for teachers, ETFO described teacher leaders as “a set of roles, part of the discussion about distributive leadership and as a key part of educational improvement efforts” (ETFO, 2013). This was notable and seemed conflicting because the term distributive leadership connotes business and neoliberal perspectives which ETFO had a history of railing against (McCaffrey, 2003). The resource ultimately concluded that:

[Teacher leadership] is about learning to work in different contexts with different people who may have learned norms of individualism, rather than collaboration.

It is about negotiating the tensions between a professional orientation to our work, even though most schools are run bureaucratically (ETFO, 2013).

This account of teacher leadership highlights the collaborative and non-hierarchical elements of third wave teacher leadership which make it the most accessible. However, it does
seem to point toward frustrations with the hierarchical notions of teacher leadership such as in the first and second wave which limit teachers’ autonomy. It also seemed to conflict with the formalized, or bureaucratized, application and participation processes which surrounded teacher leadership opportunities offered by the Ministry of Education.

Finally, in 2015, it was announced that the Ontario College of Teachers would be offering a new Additional Qualification professional learning course to teachers. For some teachers, this could cost approximately $700 and might present a barrier to entry (Ontario College of Teachers, 2015). It represents a more serious commitment by the Ontario College of Teachers (2015) toward supporting “leadership in learning communities” as outlined in its standards of practice.

In sum, these resources and programs demonstrate the increasing interest in teacher leadership in Ontario. What remains to be described is how teacher leaders develop their practice in the context of schools, with or without use of these programs. Critical analysis of these programs and the language they use indicate elements of both neo-liberal and progressive interests. For this reason, it is even more important to understand how educators in schools make sense of teacher leadership and foster its growth.

2.4 Conclusion

In this literature review I examined the significance of teacher leadership in public education according to underlying sociopolitical ideologies. This informs my positionality as a researcher and the constructivist methodological approach which this research took on. To conceptualize teacher leadership, I examined theoretical literature on distributed and transformational leadership as well as practical literature. This led me to problematize extant literature, which can be decontextualized and positivist in nature. Finally, to contextualize this
research project, I briefly examined the sociopolitical history of teaching in Ontario and current initiatives supporting teacher leadership.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter I elaborate on my approach to research given my positionality as a researcher. I describe how my positionality contributed towards the procedure, instruments of data collection, and data collection and analysis. I also provide details on sampling and participant biographies. Finally, I present the ethical review procedures of this research, as well as the limitations and strengths of this methodology before sharing concluding thoughts.

3.1 Approach to Research

As part of my efforts to be transparent as a researcher so that my imprint upon the work is recognizable, I would like to acknowledge that I designed this inquiry to fit an ethical protocol. This ethical protocol was for qualitative research involving interviews with educators in conformity with the requirements for the Master of Teaching degree at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). As such, after deciding upon my area of interest as a researcher, I tailored my research question and methodology to meet these parameters and yield a product with rigor.

Qualitative research as an approach to inquiry has evolved over time (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A current, generally accepted description is that:

Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

(Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3)
Qualitative researchers make philosophical assumptions pertaining to the nature of reality, what ought to be valued as knowledge, the role of values in research, and the process of research (Creswell, 2013). These assumptions have been articulated as ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological assumptions, respectively (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As sets of beliefs, they have been referred to as paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Creswell, 2013). Guba & Lincoln (1994) define paradigms as “the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choice of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways” (p. 105). Therefore, as part of my basic belief system, I will briefly describe the philosophical assumptions which underpinned this research project and shaped its findings.

In general terms, the philosophical assumptions fundamental to this research project draw from constructivism as outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Creswell (2013). As a researcher, I valued the individual knowledge which principals had to share as they made meaning of their experiences (van Manen, 1990 as cited in Creswell, 2013). I was not concerned with apprehending a single truth because in drawing from constructivism, I believed that principal-participants’ knowledge was a product of their constructed realities, as described by Guba & Lincoln (1994). With these philosophical assumption, I designed this project with the aim to create an understanding of teacher leadership through a reconstruction of principal-participants’ voices.

As part of recognizing that knowledge is constructed from realities, I recognized that my own experiences and values contributed how this research project was shaped and the analysis I conducted (Creswell, 2013). I embraced this position in order to make it clear that the understanding reconstructed from this research did not represent a single, apprehendable truth,
but rather the meaning I made of the knowledge a sampling of principals had to offer. The meaning I made was largely directed by the main purpose of this research, which was to inform myself as a novice educator. This perspective is evidenced throughout this methodological chapter and the rest of the research project.

3.2 Procedure

I began by conducting a literature review of teacher leadership as it related to my research question on how principals’ understandings of it inform their efforts to support it. Following this, I designed my methodology and conducted four semi-structured interviews with principals. Interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed and coded shortly thereafter. Coding allowed me to identify patterns and form themes. Doing so allowed me to reconstruct an understanding of teacher leadership and to examine it with literature. The findings and implications resulting from this procedure offer another understanding of teacher leadership to extant literature, and informed my practice as a novice teacher-leader. This procedure was designed informed namely by Creswell (2013), Saldaña (2012), Tracy (2010) and Bazeley (2009).

3.3 Instruments of Data Collection

In this study, semi-structured interviews were the key instrument of data collection. Semi-structured interviews were suitable to this study in keeping with the philosophical assumptions which underpinned it. Interviews are typically used in qualitative research to provide descriptive data concerning the meanings participants make of phenomena (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Critics (Limerick, Burgess-Limerick & Grace, 1996; Geiger, 1990; Stacey, 1988), however, have raised concerns over the power dynamics of interviews and the quality of data and understanding consequent to them. In brief, critics argue that interviews
disempower the participant by decontextualizing, depersonalizing and exploiting them. The power dynamic of the participant as the subject also implies that the researcher is objective and in control of the interview (Limerick et al., 1996). I responded to these concerns in two ways, by employing semi-structured interviews, and with my overall approach to interviews.

By employing semi-structured interviews I was able to ensure that I examined my area of interest, but there was an added degree of freedom for me to probe areas of seeming important to each individual. As a result, the data I collected not only reflected what was important to me as a researcher, but also what was important to my principal-participants. This reflects an effort on my part to share power with principal-participants and give me insight into the unique meanings that each of them made of teacher leadership.

My overall approach to conducting and analyzing interviews was guided by how Limerick et al., (1996) conceptualize each interview as “a gift received by the researcher” and participants as my equals in the process of knowledge production. One way I evidence this is by referring to interview subjects as principal-participants throughout this project in an effort to humanize and contextualize them. To ease the power dynamics of interviewing, I always attempted to telephone participants in the time leading up to the interview as suggested by Denscombe (2007). I also allowed principal-participants to interrogate me, my goals and my processes as a researcher. Finally, in my analysis of data I always tried to be conscious of the role of my interpretation, and the context from which the data came.
3.4 Participants

3.4.1 Sampling criteria

To support my qualitative inquiry I used purposeful sampling. This involved selecting individuals that could “purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 156).

Therefore, the final sampling criteria for my research participants was that:

1. They must be a practicing principal in Ontario
2. They must have been principals for at least 3 years
3. They must have demonstrated interest in the area of supporting teacher leadership

After selecting and interviewing three participant-principals, I noted strong congruencies between what two of them shared. These congruencies seemed largely attributable to their schools’ contexts. Until this point, I had not fully realized the extent to which context could influence leadership. I grew concerned that in my analysis, I would be inclined to draw patterns between their similarities and contrast the third principal-participant as an outlier. I was especially sensitive to this because the principal-participants who shared common views were both male. I did not want it to appear that patterns which emerged were tied to gender because this small-scale project did not adequately support inquiry along those lines. As a result, I interviewed an additional principal. For this fourth and final principal-participant, I added the criteria that they must identify as female, be principal of an older school, and serve in a different neighbourhood and demographic than the other principals.

3.4.2 Sample size

A sample size of four was suitable for this study given its epistemological and ontological assumptions (Dukes, 1984; Creswell, 2013). In qualitative research drawing upon constructivist
paradigms, the aim is to reconstruct understanding based on the meanings people make of a certain phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This opposes quantitative research and positivist paradigms which seek to prove a singular truth. To do so, these types of research must generally rely on large sample sizes for statistical validation of a truth (Creswell, 2013).

By contrast, I make no such claims of offering a universal truth as I draw upon constructivist paradigms in qualitative research. I emphasize that the findings of this research project represent my interpretation of data as a novice educator and teacher-leader hoping to strengthen her practice. Therefore, a sample size of four is suitable so that I can provide adequate rich description to support my position. This is in line with what Tracy (2010) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) have articulated in terms of excellence in qualitative research.

3.4.3 Sampling recruitment

To find principals meeting the aforementioned criteria, I conducted an initial search using Mentoring Moments, an “online community of practice for educators across Ontario supporting teacher professional development” (Teaching Policy and Standards Branch, 2016). I cross-referenced potential participants’ professional backgrounds using LinkedIn and school websites, and contacted principals who I perceived as having greatest amount or variety of relevant experiences by email, as supported by Groenwald (2004).

3.4.4 Participant biographies

Nik. Nik was the principal of a school which had opened a few years prior to when I interviewed him. He established the school with the mission statement “equity and excellence for all” to highlight is social justice cornerstone. Nik was personally deeply committed to ensuring equitable outcome for all of his students. This was especially important because the
school served a large proportion of students from identifiable minority groups that might otherwise have been marginalized.

Nik experienced many highs and lows on his way to becoming a principal. During his 14 years as a certified teacher, Nik was laid off twice during neoliberal-influenced cutbacks and restructuring. Eventually, Nik served as a board equity and diversity consultant for two years and held a large portfolio of over 100 schools. This exposed him to many principals, teachers and educational leaders. Following this, Nik worked at the Ministry of Education for a year in the equity department before becoming a vice-principal. Nik practiced as a vice-principal for 6 years in two schools before opening and presiding over his school at the time of the interview.

**Simon.** Simon was principal of a school which had been open for two months when I interviewed him. His school was a few kilometers away from Nik’s and served a similarly diverse community. Simon was very considerate and concerned for all his students and staff, repeatedly emphasizing that he considered non-teaching positions such as janitors and secretaries to be integral parts.

Simon had a wide variety of teacher leadership-related experiences. He practiced as a teacher for 13 years, vice-principal for four years, and then as a principal for six years. At that time, Simon became the system-level principal of Leadership and Staff Development for his school board. He held this position for three and a half years before he was given the honour of opening his school at the time that I interviewed him.

**Kimberley.** Kimberley was a principal who stood out for her commitment to her students’ academic success. She had experience as a leader both in educational contexts and volunteer contexts.
Of the four principals I interviewed, Kimberley brought the greatest diversity of experience from teaching in schools. Kimberley had taught in core French, regular stream and special education settings across many elementary grades for a total of eleven years. She practiced as a vice-principal for four years at two different schools, and as principal for 11 years at 3 different schools.

**Alanna.** When I met Alanna, she described her leadership style as “leading with love” and this was evident from how she regarded her students and staff. She emphasized her concern not only with students’ academic success, but also their socio-emotional well-being.

Alanna began her work in northern Ontario as an educational assistant. Due to a lack of resources, she often took on leadership positions which led to her pursuing a career as a teacher. Alanna taught for nearly 15 years from kindergarten to grade eight, in regular stream and special education. She practiced as a principal for a year and a half, before practicing as a principal for seven years in four different schools.

**3.5 Data Collection and Analysis**

Data was audio-recorded and transcribed shortly after interviews. I reviewed all transcripts in their entirety before beginning analysis as part of my efforts to keep principal-participants’ data contextualized (Limerick et al., 1996). While doing so, I bracketed ideas using memos to hold my personal views at abeyance until they could be evaluated more holistically with the data altogether (Creswell, 2013). I then proceeded to code the transcripts in aim of formulating themes, referring namely to Saldaña (2012) and Creswell (2013). I conducted two cycles of coding using descriptive, emotional, value, in vivo, and pattern coding. I relied predominantly on descriptive coding because I was concerned that I would attribute the wrong
emotion or value since I was relying on only one instrument of data collection. Following this, I organized codes into categories and with another level of abstraction I decided upon themes.

Bazeley (2009) stresses the importance of specifying how themes “emerged” from data. My position aligns with this because during this process I made an innumerable amount of decisions based on my philosophical assumptions. Every decision to award a code, each code I used, the types of coding I used, and how I turned these codes into categories and then themes all contribute to the interpretation and meaning I made of data. Analysis was conducted with the goals of this research project in mind. This included informing my practice as a novice educator and teacher-leader and an aim to share findings with other educators. I referred to extant literature on teacher leadership to draw further conclusions and draw implications.

3.6 Ethical Review Procedures

All aspects of this study were reviewed and approved by my course instructor, Dr. Angela MacDonald-Vemic and complied with the clearance issued by the Research Ethics Board of OISE. Information regarding the scope of the study and its ethical considerations were shared before principals agreed to participate in this research project. This included that participants’ identities would be protected, that there were no known risks to participation and that there was no monetary reward for participating. Additionally, interview records would be kept for up to five years on my personal, password-protected computer and back-up drive with only my course instructor having access to the data. Agreeing to these items, they signed letters of consent (Appendix A).

At the beginning of each interview, the scope of this research project was discussed with each principal-participant to ensure their consent was fully informed. During this time, I also explained my methodology and personal approach to research as related to my philosophical
assumptions in lay terms. After affirming their consent, principal-participants were reminded that pseudonyms would be used to protect their identities and that all identifying data would be excluded. They were also reminded that they could refrain from answering any question, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time before it was printed.

Participants were sent electronic copies of this study in full upon its completion. I met with any participants after the completion of the study at their request if they wished to discuss the final product.

3.7 Limitations and Strengths

In this chapter, I have made the philosophical assumptions which underpin this research explicit in order to demonstrate how they have directed the methodology. I also described steps that I took to ensure that this methodology could support research of excellent quality, guided by Tracy (2009) and Guba and Lincoln (1994). Part of creating a sound methodology was tailoring it to suit the interests of this study, and so naturally it has some limitations.

The limitations to this study involve the absence of a theoretical framework, the use of a single instrument of data collection, and the small sample size. At various points throughout the chapter I explained these decisions with supporting literature. Essentially, these decisions were made bearing in mind this study’s primary purpose was to inform my practice as a novice educator and teacher-leader. As such, I preferred to use a small sample size with a single instrument of data collection so that I could manage the amount of data and focus on rigorous analysis. Further, I made no false pretenses of this study offering a widely generizable or singular truth. Rather, I make my positionality and lens of interpretation clear throughout the study.
Throughout the process of conducting this research project, I was often reminded by teachers that not every principal supports teacher leadership. Some even believed it was a rarity. This served as another reminder to me that this research project, especially as a qualitative study drawing from constructivist paradigms, is not generizable in broad terms. Rather, it reflects the meaning I made from interviews with a sampling of principals on how they conceptualize and support teacher leadership. I will carry this new understanding forward in my practice, so that regardless of whether the principal I work for is naturally interested in teacher leadership, I know how to seek support myself. I thusly offer it to the educational research community and extant literature as another understanding of teacher leadership.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I elaborated on my positionality as a researcher drawing from constructivist paradigms and I explained how this shaped the present research. I provided detailed descriptions of the procedure, instruments of data collection, participants, data collection and analysis. I also shared the ethical research review procedures that this research underwent. Finally, I shared limitations and strengths to this study as a small-scale, qualitative inquiry project drawing upon phenomenological approaches.
Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I report my findings from interviews with four principals examining their understandings of teacher leadership and how they support its development. I relied primarily on my lens as a novice teacher aiming to strengthen my leadership practice for analysis and found the following themes emerged: 1) principals had practical conceptualizations of teacher leadership, 2) principals supported teacher leadership as informal practice, 3) the importance of inclusive approaches to teacher leadership development, and 4) teacher leadership as coming to know oneself.

4.1 Practical Conceptualizations of Teacher Leadership

Analysis revealed that principals had practical conceptualizations of teacher leadership. Common meanings included that teachers exercised leadership beginning in the classroom, and that teacher leadership featured strong relationships, strong collaboration and passion. How principals variedly described teacher leadership with respect to student voice highlighted the recursive and situated nature of teacher leadership.

4.1.1 Teachers exercising leadership in the classroom

Each principal believed that teachers exercise leadership inherently as part of teaching in the classroom. Simon described the “power of influence” as central to this form of leadership. Each principal expressed deep commitment to the success and well-being of every student, and leadership in the classroom represented an invaluable opportunity “to make sure that every child knows they belong” (Nik, personal communication, November 4, 2015). This set a tone of inclusive and progressive education valuing both academic and social learning. It was present in each interview.
Simon believed that many educators need to reconceptualize teacher leadership. He recognized that teacher leadership “does not mean that they are the chair of this committee or that committee. Leadership is in everything they do. They are all leaders when they get behind… get inside their classroom.” In this way, Simon challenged hierarchical first and second wave conceptualizations of teacher leadership which he still encountered.

Through the power of influence, Simon found that teachers were leaders “by their dress, by their manner, by their words, by the selection of their activities… and their mood.” Kimberley and Nik similarly described modeling as a key component to leading the classroom. This contrasted the large amount of literature which describes teacher leadership as additional responsibilities and practices.

No principal explicitly mentioned distributed leadership theory, but it was reflected in how they viewed many individuals as leaders at once. Principals were likely familiar with distributed leadership at least in part due to the Ontario Leadership Framework (Ministry of Education, 2013) which is intended to frame principals’ practice. It is notable that principals used a subtle difference in their language and did not use words such as ‘outcomes’ and ‘results’, but instead emphasized social aspects of learning.

It is also interesting that principals referred to the classroom space as the starting point of teacher leadership. Their paramount interest in student academic and social well-being academically was similar to student-centered conceptualizations of teacher leadership described by Sergiovanni and Starratt (1991), but Sergiovanni and Starratt (1991) were less focused on the classroom space. It is possible that the work-to-rule action occurring at the time of this study which prohibited non-classroom related activities emphasized the importance of the classroom space to principals.
4.1.2 Teacher leadership features strong relationships, strong collaboration, and passion

I identified three common elements to each principal’s description of excellent teacher leaders beyond their classroom leadership. Excellent teacher leaders built strong relationships with students and colleagues, were strong team players, and were passionate.

In Alanna’s view of leadership, relationships have “to be your foundational starting point. In order to empower leadership, in order to encourage staff to feel good about what they’re doing, you have to be building those relationships.” Throughout principals’ accounts, teacher leaders built relationships with students in their classes, which presumably carried on in following years once the students left their classes. To foster relationships outside the classroom, Simon explained that “anything [teachers] do above and beyond,” such as leading extra-curricular activities and facilitating student leadership “assists them in their school presence.” This “school presence” seemed to be evidenced in Alanna’s, Kimberley’s and Simon’s accounts of teachers who were sought out by students throughout the school for emotional-behavioural support.

The principals also described the importance of teacher leaders’ relationships with other staff in team work. Team work referred to collaboration between staff teaching the same grade, in the same division, or in staff meetings. Collaboration is a practice described throughout literature on teacher leadership, and was emphasized by Silva, Gimbert and Nolan (2000) as part of contemporary, third wave leadership.

Alanna emphasized that teacher leadership “doesn’t have to be a big production at a one monthly staff meeting. It’s just basically the day-to-day stuff.” The “day-to-day stuff” permeated each principal’s accounts of teacher leadership, ranging from classroom leadership, to
providing advice to colleagues, to working together in responding to challenging students and situations. This reinforces Gunter’s (2000) methodological premise that understanding teacher leadership “means acknowledging that theory is in practice and practice in theory” (p. 630).

Lastly, the role of passion in teacher leadership was very important in principals’ conceptualizations. Kimberley believed that passion increased influence so that:

[i]t’s almost the passion is more important than any of the content I find because… it’s contagious and if you can get adults excited, the kids are excited, and then as soon as kids are excited about their learning they learn more

In this way, passion enhanced teacher leaders’ influence on students and colleagues. It related to Alanna’s hope that “every teacher would take something on that they were passionate about, what they had confidence in sharing” to facilitate instructional leadership and initiatives. Simon described passion as a motivator for teachers to be leaders take on a wide range of extra-curricular initiatives from coaching to organizing resources. Nik believe that teacher leaders brought “their own passion to the conversation,” and also “help[ed] others to do so.”

Principals preferred to conceptualize teacher leadership along the lines of these practices as opposed to generic leader traits in business-oriented literature. This supports beliefs that all teachers can be leaders because teachers can learn to take on these practices. Principals also demonstrated that understandings of leadership, where theory lies in practice and vice versa, are valuable and highly applicable. Additionally, by focusing on practices involving relationships and passion instead of instruction and pedagogy, principals begin to highlight the importance of affective dimensions within teacher leadership that are generally overlooked.
4.1.3 Situated nuances of teacher leadership surrounding student voice

Principals had nuanced conceptualizations of teacher leadership influenced by the role of student voice in their school. Namely, Nik and Simon’s conceptualizations of teacher leadership pertaining to student voiced differed in relation to school contexts as structured social spaces.

At Simon’s school, student voice was fostered in a large way through its student parliament. He was demonstrably excited by the growing role it was taking on. As opposed to teacher leaders arbitrarily deciding what extra-curricular activities to hold, students were taking the lead through their student parliament:

\[
\text{[s]tudents generate a lot of [programs] in the sense that the kids say we should have this club, we should have that team… You hear students planning and sitting around the table saying which adult in this building do we think we can go talk to. I tease the staff and tell them that this is going to happen, and I’m not going to set it up…}
\]

When students took the lead in extra-curricular groups, teacher leaders assumed a role more akin to facilitators in order to support students. Simon emphasized that this was imperative for sustained interest from students. In this way, the school’s student parliament became a micro-social structure which influenced Simon’s conceptualization of teacher leadership.

The situatedness of Simon’s conceptualization was evidenced by how Nik also fostered student voice in his school, but it resulted in a different nuance of teacher leadership. At Nik’s school, student voice permeated instruction and extra-curricular activities through prevalent used of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy (CRRP). Valuing student voice was integral to accepting students’ prior experiences and other ways of knowing because the school’s population was so diverse (Murray & West-Burns, 2011; Gay, 2010).
Drawing from this, Nik conceptualized part of teacher leadership as understanding that “school is not for [students to] come in here, and for them to feel they’re guests and that we’re the presenter. But instead, as we’re the guest, and we’re right there with them.” So although Nik and Simon fostered student voice in their schools, the role of CRRP and a student parliament structure resulted in the two principals conceptualizing teacher leadership differently as it related to student voice. Nik emphasized teacher leaders needed to understand themselves as more equal to students in terms of their importance, while Simon emphasized that teachers leaders needed to facilitate student goals.

Based upon my literature and personal experiences in schools, I found that Nik’s conceptualization of teacher leaders as equals and guests with students challenged normative hierarchical thinking. His reflexivity and critical consciousness seemed to evidence Bourdieu’s belief that these practices allow leaders to control how internalization of power differentials in social structures affects their leadership.

Nik’s conceptualization had situatedness in his efforts to ensure equitable education for minority students at his school. This was recognized by examining the recursive nature between leader and context, or habitus and field in Bourdieu’s framework. Analysis relying on generic models of leadership borrowed from business would not have revealed such understanding. For teacher leaders, this highlights the importance conceptualizing their teacher leadership practice around who they are and the social space they are in.

4.2 Principals Supporting Teacher Leadership as Informal Practice

It was found that principals supported teacher leadership as informal practice. This involved fostering teachers’ identities as leaders, providing mentorship, and novel learning opportunities. Principals did not describe establishing professional learning communities or
referring teachers toward formal leadership development programs offered by teachers’
governing bodies.

4.2.1 Principals fostering teachers’ identities as leaders

In their efforts to support teacher leadership, each principal described fostering teachers’
sense of identity as leaders. To do so, they helped teachers recognize their strengths and how 
these strengths could have greater impact on the school, and in some cases beyond.

Alanna and Kimberley described using conversation as a starting point for developing 
teachers’ leadership identities. Alanna shared an example of when a Teacher Performance 
Appraisal led her to engage in this sort of conversation, but principals generally described these 
conversations occurring during everyday affairs. For example, Kimberley recalled a situation 
when staff repeatedly called on a particular teacher to intervene in behaviour situations because 
they had been unsuccessful. Kimberley followed up with this teacher in informal conversation 
after several of these incidences and encouraged her to train the other teachers how to respond. 
Subsequently, Kimberley was in regular communication with the teacher, and eventually 
encouraged her to pursue an administrative position. In his conversations, sometimes Simon 
asked teachers to reflect on how they were being perceived by others. This often led to their 
acknowledgement of leadership practice that already existed.

The need for teachers to identify as leaders is consistent with research (Lambert 2003; 
York-Barr & Duke, 2004) which found that teachers do not identify as leaders due to their views 
that leadership is positional. Conversely, principals believed that every teacher could exercise 
leadership irrelevant of hierarchal positions. This is in line with distributed leadership theory 
which principals are exposed to at the very least through the *Ontario Leadership Framework* 
(2013). Teachers, however, have no guaranteed exposure to concepts of distributed and teacher
leadership. For this reason, recent and increasing efforts from Ontario teachers’ governing bodies to promote teacher leadership could prove useful for fostering teacher-leader identity.

Nik was the only principal who made leadership an explicit expectation for staff. His thinking on this topic was that:

> [e]very teacher can be a leader, it’s what makes a leader. So we’re defining what makes a leader. So a leader to me is defined by their actions in terms of what they model to their students. What they model to the community (Personal communication, November 4, 2015).

In this way, Nik’s teachers had a clear and achievable concept of how to engage in leadership. This reflected suggestions made by teachers for principals on how to support teacher leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

### 4.2.2 Principals providing mentorship as they were mentored

All principals referred to mentoring as a significant means of supporting teacher leadership, but how each principal described mentorship differed. A pattern emerged in that their accounts of mentoring teachers featured the same elements as their accounts of being mentored.

Neither Alanna, Nik, Simon nor Kimberley had imagined themselves as a principal when they were teachers. Alanna described taking steps towards administration due to the encouragement of others, and similarly, she described encouraging certain staff to do the same. She maintained strong relationships with her mentors over time through correspondence, and she described doing the same with teachers she mentors. Nik appreciated the ongoing, informal, check-in conversations he had with the principal who encouraged him to pursue an administrative role, and he described engaging in the same sort of conversation with others.
Simon relays the same analogies that were relayed to him when he was deciding to pursue the administrative path.

Kimberley’s especially unique view of mentorship highlighted emphasized the extent to which experience as a mentee could inform efforts a mentor. Generally, mentorship refers to sharing experience through relationship (Shillingstad et al., 2015). Kimberley, however, did not believe that mentorship necessarily involved purposeful sharing and relationship building for the growth of the mentee. Referring to an experience as a new principal, Kimberley recalled:

I once had a superintendent that... I couldn’t stand working with, and she found me difficult too. And yet when I look back... [what I learned in working with her are] some of the things I still think are really important… So while she made me crazy as a superintendent, she had a big impact on how I view [principalship]. So that was, to me, mentoring.

As a result, Kimberley believed that a form of mentorship could be her staff modelling after her. She did not believe she necessarily needed to make additional efforts in order to mentor staff.

The congruence between how principals described being mentored and how they mentored teacher leaders suggests that principals’ practice as mentors is largely informed by their own lived experiences as mentee and reflects Bourdieu’s concept of habitus.

4.2.3 Principals offer novel opportunities to support teacher leadership

Nik, Kimberley and Alanna described working with interested teachers to provide them new opportunities which would strengthen their practice. Because Nik had recently opened a new school, a significant way he supported teachers’ leadership growth was by hiring them for specific positions that could strengthen their practice. In one instance, a teacher was pursuing
principalship and so applied for the most complex role available involving special education, math coach, student success and planning. As such, the position included many responsibilities which were less familiar to her. Nick described that in this position:

…she thrived in terms of the relationships she built and because she had so many different roles she met so many different people… she was able to connect with people and how they got to know her beyond just the role, but as a person… connecting with families when kids were at their weakest point, when teachers were at their most vulnerable, and how she was able to build bridges and bring about such change in our school.

In her new role, Nik’s teacher exercised leadership featuring strong relationships, collaboration and passion. The new context, however, allowed her to practice these skills in different and new ways by exposing her to new people, issues and contexts. For example, due to the new responsibilities in special education and opportunities to collaborate with parents, this teacher established the school’s collaborative problem solving strategy for behavioural issues. Nik believed she was also instrumental in influencing other staff to take on asset-based approaches to special education.

Kimberley and Alanna often did not have the occasion to hire teacher leaders into new positions, so they actively found new opportunities to support teacher leadership development. For example, as principals without vice-principals at smaller schools, they would ask a teacher-leader to take on the role of teacher-in-charge in their absence. The role of teacher-in-charge gave these individuals new opportunities to support behavioural issues outside their classrooms, and more teachers were directed toward them for support. This represented new opportunities to build relationship, collaborate and share passion. Kimberley and Alanna also observed an
additional benefit, though. They observed teachers were strengthened in their identities as leaders and grew more confident in their leadership with practice.

These accounts demonstrate how the relationship between teacher leaders and principals is critical for teacher leadership development. Communication, openness and consideration on the part of the principal were critical to these teachers assuming new leadership roles. These accounts also indicate that principals believed teacher leadership is developed in large part through practice, and not theory. This relates to Landing and Christie’s (2003) concept of developing understandings of leadership in practice, and not only for leadership as theory which may or may not apply. As such, it begins to provide insights into principals’ epistemological values. Further, by valuing experiential learning, it suggests principals’ values are in line to support professional learning communities. This could become more relevant in the future, as teacher leadership becomes more strongly associated with professional learning communities (Hairon et al., 2015).

4.3 Challenges and Opportunities for Principals in Supporting Teacher Leadership

Principals experienced challenges and opportunities as they sought to support teacher leadership inclusively. Principals wanted to support teacher leadership, but look felt it should be balanced bearing in mind others’ reactions. Principals also saw opportunities to support teacher leadership better by considering teachers’ leadership styles and were sometimes challenged by the close attention it required.

4.3.1 Balancing teacher leadership with other teachers’ interests

Three principals shed light on how teacher leadership can be at odds with other teachers’ interests and so needs to be approached carefully. Kimberley pointed out that sometimes, as
leaders, teachers can sometimes “approach things sort of the wrong way for starters and then sort of have to pull back and reevaluate” in reference to other teachers’ reactions.

This was a major concern for Simon. He shared:

I think it’s important for me that people feel they belong… When the children come into this school they need to feel like they belong. That they have a voice… Why isn’t it any different for the adults? If the adults come in and feel that they aren’t important, don’t have a voice, don’t have a role to play, then coming to work is not fun. And it needs to be enjoyable for them.

Simon believed that a sense of belonging was requisite to a teacher’s enjoyment and success. To promote inclusivity, Simon found that he sometimes “put the brakes on for [teacher leaders] to say ‘stop’ for a second and consider all [the] stakeholders… before moving forward.”

In these ways, principals highlighted how they teacher leadership can be recursive, based on others’ reactions. This contrasts a large amount of literature which only focuses on conceptualizing teacher leadership as a set of practices, and does not address how leadership practice can change according to others’ responses (York-Bar & Duke, 2004; Silva et al., 2000).

Nik described a different scenario at his school where he observed that teachers who gave “half an effort” transferred out. He believed this was because he explicitly set leadership as a norm for teachers, so lack of leadership “stands out. It stands out because everyone else you know, there’s just so much in terms of the time they give to the kids.” Nik did his best to support these teachers by finding them external assignments better suited for their strengths.
These findings emphasize teacher leadership’s recursive nature from interactions with others. Principals were cautious of teacher leadership eliciting adverse reactions from staff which could affect other teachers’ sense of inclusion. On the other hand, when teacher leadership is the norm, an opposite scenario can occur where a teacher can feel excluded. This demonstrates another dimension to the situatedness of teacher leadership: in relationships with others.

4.3.2 Recognizing teachers’ leadership styles to support leadership development

Principals acknowledged different leadership styles throughout interviews as they described different ways to support leadership. They differentiated leadership styles in terms of how public the leadership styles were, and how leaders engaged colleagues.

Alanna used an analogy of different learning styles to illustrate the importance of being sensitive to different leadership styles. Alanna described her stance as:

I wanted teachers to be aware of those different learning styles for kids, so I have to also be aware of different learning styles for teachers. Not everyone is an extrovert. Not everyone will be the teacher… at a staff meeting saying “Ra, ra, look what I’m doing in my class!” … I have to know them well enough to respect when and how they want to share.

To get to know teachers’ leadership styles, Alanna scheduled observation times in classrooms and follow up meetings on a regular basis. Kimberley described similar practices, but both stressed their good intentions in supporting teachers as they did so.

Simon and Nik described staffing their schools with teachers’ leadership styles in mind. They gave teachers positions so that all the teachers in a grade and in a division could best “utilize each other’s strengths” (Nik, personal communication, November 4, 2015). Nik
observed that teams created with teachers’ leadership styles functioned more smoothly, and allowed for “quiet leaders” (Nik, personal communication, November 4, 2015) to be heard.

Teacher leadership styles were important to principals so that they could appropriate leadership contexts for teachers. This is notable from because teachers’ different leadership styles are generally not the main focus of extant literature on teacher leadership (Shillingstad et al., 2015). Additionally, literature that focuses on instruction-related practices such as sharing resources and planning curriculum can overlook that each teacher has their own unique personality and experiences which affect their leadership practice. This points toward the possibility of leadership style being further examined as part of Bourdieu’s notion of leader habitus.

4.3 Teacher Leadership as Coming to Know Oneself

No research question in this project directly aimed to explore the relationship between teacher leadership and personal life, but their inextricable connection underpinned several examples of teacher leadership which principals shared. Kimberley engaged in leadership throughout her life, so she believed it was natural that it became part of her practice as a teacher. Alanna and Simon shared how their family responsibilities affected decisions they made as they sought new opportunities for leadership. Nik viewed his most rewarding experience in education as being a teacher at the school his children attended because there was a deeply personal reward in seeing his daughters benefit from his commitment to the school.

Alanna shared a poignant example that highlighted the interconnectedness of leadership development and personal life. Alanna had immediately recognized a teacher as a “bright light” in her classroom. This teacher excelled in her position teaching a developmentally delayed class, and she had an outstanding ability to connect with the most challenging students to the point that
they often sought her out when they were struggling. Despite these successes and having spent seven years in the same position, she had not sought out new opportunities for growth or shared her talent beyond the classroom.

In conversation with the teacher, Alanna learned that she was in the midst of a painful divorce and had been experiencing many challenges at home for a number of years. So, when Alanna asked her to begin recognizing her leadership potential, the teacher said that “although she felt that she could, that she had the potential, she did, she felt that staying in this classroom, she was doing that because she felt supported by the [educational assistants], she knew the program, she was comfortable.” This teacher’s experience illustrates how the demands from her personal life affected her priorities at a teacher. It serves as a reminder that teachers, beyond their position and title, are humans, teaching from their hearts (Palmer, 1998).

When it came to supporting teacher leadership development, Kimberley observed that “not everyone has the same priorities in life.” She referred to some teachers as operating in “preservation mode,” trying to keep up with the classroom, who she believed were often less interested in leadership development. There are infinite reasons why a teacher might be operating in “preservation mode” (Kimberley, personal communication, November 20, 2015), but Alanna’s story, highlights the influence of one’s “inner landscape” (Palmer, 1998) in their ability to practice as a teacher and as a leader. This is an area that is rarely addressed in the extant literature.

Following that discussion, Alanna provided leadership opportunities for this teacher which led the teacher to seek out further opportunities for growth. Alanna has continued to support her with mentorship since then. Alanna described the teacher as having “left the marriage and… has become a much stronger, more confident, independent woman as well as a
much stronger, more involved teacher.” From Alanna’s account, it appears that fostering her leadership skills was a factor in this teacher’s overall sense of empowerment both personally, and professionally.

Palmer (1998) puts forward that, “good teaching depends less on the methods… than on the degree to which [we] know and trust our selfhood – and [are] willing to make it available and vulnerable in the service of learning” (p. 2). Because of this, I believe principals’ accounts demonstrate that teacher leadership, as it begins with teaching, is inextricable from a teacher’s sense of self, including their personal life.

According to Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1996) “[c]oming to know oneself occurs during the process of being in relations with others” (p. 69). In this way, I understand that principals’ efforts to support teacher leadership growth provided new opportunities for teachers to also know themselves in relation to the members of their school and educational communities.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the findings I drew according to my interest as a novice educator interested in strengthening her leadership practice. I found that each principal conceptualized leadership by first considering classroom leadership and features including strong relationships, collaboration and passion. Their conceptualizations of teacher leadership diverged around supporting student voice and this served to highlight the situatedness of leadership. Principals described supporting teacher leadership informally, namely through fostering leadership identities, mentoring and providing novel learning opportunities when possible. As teacher leadership grew, principals saw challenges in how leadership was received by other staff. They also saw opportunities to better support leadership by considering each teacher as an individual learner with a different leadership style. Lastly, I described how I found leadership to
involve coming to know oneself in relationship to others. This was not stated explicitly by any principal, but was a meaning I made from principals’ accounts of their and others’ leadership journeys. In the next chapter, I address implications of this study’s findings, and point towards recommendations and future areas of research.
Chapter 5: Implications

5.0 Overview of the Chapter

The present study was designed as a departure from theoretical literature on teacher leadership so as to understand its practice in schools. The findings describe how principals who value teacher leadership support its practice and growth in their school. It emphasized the beginnings of teacher leadership in with students, and as such, highlights the potential for every teacher to exercise leadership and consider it part of their practice. This chapter summarizes the research findings, highlights the present study’s implications for various stakeholders in education, and suggests directions for future research.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings and their Significance

Drawing upon qualitative research paradigms and phenomenological approaches to research, this study aimed to understand the meanings principals make of the term teacher leadership, and how these meanings inform their efforts to support it in their schools. Analysis was conducted with my lens as a novice educator interested in strengthening my teacher leadership practice. It revealed that: 1) principals had practical conceptualizations of teacher leadership, 2) principals supported teacher leadership as an informal practice, 3) challenges and opportunities in inclusive efforts to support teacher leadership, and 4) teacher leadership as coming to know oneself.

Firstly, principals’ conceptualizations of teacher leadership dwelled in the practical. They began by conceptualizing teacher leadership around the classroom, and found it to feature strong relationships, strong collaboration and passion. Principals’ conceptualizations of teacher leadership diverged around student voice, and I this demonstrated how context informs
leadership. Bourdieu’s notions of examining leadership as recursive between habitus (leader informed by lived experiences) and field (context) served well to this end.

Secondly, principals supported teacher leadership as an informal practice. In doing so, principals relied heavily on their personal knowledges, experiences, and perceptions to make decisions surrounding whose leadership practice to support, and how. This highlighted the methodological value to Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, which considers these factors in a leader’s practice. Principals supported teacher leadership by fostering teachers’ identities as leaders, providing mentorship, and affording novel opportunities that would enhance their leadership practice. It was challenging for principals to find the time to support teacher leadership, especially because the support offered added to their workload and was outside of their formal responsibilities. Altogether, this represents informal practice which is therefore not guaranteed to all teachers.

Thirdly, as principals supported leadership, they experienced challenges and opportunities in they sought to support teacher leadership inclusively. Principals wanted to support teacher leadership, but were sometimes concerned by how it was adversely received by other teachers. Principals also saw opportunities to support teacher leadership better by considering teachers’ leadership styles, but it required strategizing and observation which could be time consuming. This served to highlight that understandings of teacher leadership should not be decontextualized, because each context has unique individuals and relationships which inform practice.

Lastly, I made meaning of teacher leadership as part of coming to know oneself. Principals’ accounts of themselves and teachers growing as leaders impressed upon me that realizing one’s leadership potential is inextricably linked to one’s personal life and inner
TEACHER LEADERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS AND SUPPORTS

landscape. Drawing upon Palmer (1998), I put forward that this is because educators teach with their heart. In this way, the development of teacher leadership does not occur in focusing on traits, circumstantial or transformational theory. Rather, it occurs as a journey of coming to know oneself in relation to others as teachers teach from the heart.

5.2 Implications

The present study has important implications for how leadership is cultivated in educational systems. I begin by sharing the broad implications of this study for various stakeholders in educational systems. Following this, I share the narrow implications of this study on myself as a novice teacher professionally entering the public education workforce, and as a teacher-researcher.

5.2.1 Broad implications: Giving name to teacher leadership, its related practices, and its evolving role in schools

In broad strokes, the present study highlights the need for governing bodies in education to formally recognize the notion of teacher leadership as they simultaneously encourage models of progressively-oriented distributed leadership (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001). In Ontario’s context, this includes the Ministry of Education, the Ontario College of Teachers, teachers’ unions, and faculties of education. As they convey a concept of teacher leadership, it needs to be represented holistically, featuring affective components such as relationships and passion as in the Ontario Leadership Framework (Ministry of Education, 2013) for principals, and extend into recognizing the role of teachers’ ‘inner landscapes’ (Palmer, 1998).

Since there is no guarantee that teachers will be supported in developing their leadership practice if not on a regular basis, teachers interested in doing so should begin by communicating their interest to principals and also seek external opportunities. This could involve networking
events and participating in professional learning communities, particularly as they become more prevalent. As teachers seek out novel opportunities communicate their goals with principals, they should remember that there are a multitude of factors only apparent from the principals’ vantage. As such, they should not take it personally if they are occasionally denied opportunities which they believe would be beneficial.

5.2.2 Narrow implications: Evolving identity as a teacher-leader and teacher-researcher teaching from the heart

As a novice teacher embarking on my professional career as an educator, the value which principals ascribed to teacher leadership was a heartening reminder of the reasons why I pursued a career in education to begin with. I learned that classroom leadership should not be underestimated, because classrooms offer incomparable time and opportunity to build relationships with students and help them grow. When I began this study, I considered principalship a possible eventuality, but upon completing this study, I feel empowered and satisfied in knowing that teachers have ample space to foster growth beginning in the classroom.

Engaging in the present study has also helped me to re-conceptualize myself as a teacher-researcher. I use the term teacher-researcher to refer to the lens I bring to the concepts and circumstances I encounter. Engaging in the present study has helped me give deep meaning to the terms ontological and epistemological assumptions. These understandings help me to remember that there is rarely an absolute truth to teach, and that there are always multiple realities weaving together the fabric of the classroom and the sociopolitical contexts it is situated in at any given moment. They help me to value the knowledge students bring from their diverse backgrounds and thus contribute to my being able to accept students as they are. Perhaps most
powerfully, they inform me as I seek to recognize and disrupt discrimination as an anti-oppressive educator.

Finally, this evolution in my personally held ontological and epistemological assumptions has allowed me to value experiential learning and reflection, and come to a place where I am finally able to ‘teach from the heart’ (Palmer, 1997). As I recognize that the ‘inner landscape’ of my personal life is inextricable from my life in the classroom, I feel better prepared with a more holistic conceptualization of what it is to be a teacher.

5.3 Recommendations

The implications of the present study point specifically to several recommendations for various stakeholders in education systems. Four recommendations are outlined below:

1) Research and literature examining educational leadership should recognize the internal and affective dimensions of leadership development and move beyond generic and business-minded trait, circumstantial, and transformational leadership theories.

2) Governing bodies over teachers including the ministries of education, teachers’ federations, teachers’ unions, and teacher training programs should make teacher leadership an explicit concept and practice. To foster this identity, appropriate training and support should be provided accessibly and beginning in teacher education programs.

3) Principals should reflect on their practice and consider whether they are cultivating teacher leadership if they are not doing so already. Principals who support teacher leadership should ensure they do so equitably by ensuring that all teachers interested in developing their leadership practice are able to access available resources. They should also reflect to ensure that their biases minimally affect the process.
4) Teachers should recognize that they have the opportunity to exercise leadership without any formalized leadership position. As such, they should feel empowered in their practice.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

The present study examined how principals’ conceptualizations of teacher leadership informed their efforts to support its development. Study of teachers’ conceptualizations of teacher leadership, and how they perceive and respond to their principal’s efforts to support its practice would complement the findings brought forth from the present study.

Furthermore, it is recommended that a critical framework be applied to future research in light of the informal nature of supporting teacher leadership. This study uncovered that as an informal practice, principals rely on their personal judgements of whose leadership to cultivate, based on what meaning they make of leadership, and offer support informed by their personal experiences. As such, it is important to interrogate how social reproductions of privilege might be involved in this process.

Recent and personal experiences give me special interest in this area. During the course of the present study, I completed an internship with a school board. I was surprised to learn that only approximately 40% of its superintendence was female. The preceding year, it was even lower. This was all despite the fact that the teaching pool is predominately female.

On a different occasion, my attention was drawn to a principal in the board who won a national award of excellence because of her success in serving a school with a high level of low socioeconomic status families. Interestingly, during my internship, I had met the board’s principals who were purportedly outstanding in equitable practice, but she was not amongst them. That group of principals was predominantly male and non-racialized. Conversely, this
principal was female and racialized. I have since wondered how this principal may have been at odds with social and cultural reproductions of privilege, and how the ontological and epistemological assumptions of education officials are at play in leadership processes.

From these experiences, I believe that applying a critical analysis is imperative to understanding the practice of supporting leadership in our board. At a surface level, I wonder whether some teachers’ leadership potential goes unrecognized and unrealized because their practice is not akin to that of their principal’s. Some principals may even believe that some teachers are incapable of being leaders regardless of how much support they receive. On a deeper level, I wonder how the ontological and epistemological assumptions of policies and administrators may lead to members of certain identifiable groups being excluded from leadership development and recognition.

5.5 Concluding Comments

The present study revealed important opportunities for teachers to engage and strengthen their leadership practice given principals’ conceptualizations of teacher leadership. This study found that every teacher has the opportunity to exercise leadership beginning with the students they teach, and extending to their colleagues and school community. This represents incredible opportunity to influence others, and as such, it is important that teachers’ identities as leaders are fostered by governing bodies and administrators. As teacher leadership is cultivated, it is important that meaning is made in relation to others. This means that teacher leadership’s affective facets must be considered as meaning is made.

Further, a major finding from this study was the informal way in which teacher leadership is presently supported by principals. This leads to principals relying largely on their personal meanings of leadership, and their personal judgements of who to support and how. In
light of the powerful role that principals’ personal judgements play, future areas of research should examine the intersection of educational and teacher leadership and critical theory, with specific interest in social and cultural reproductions of privilege. Finally, the most enduring outcome of the present study will be the imprint is has left upon me as I move forward in my career: humbled yet empowered as a teacher-leader and teacher-researcher, unafraid to engage in the journey that is teaching from the heart.
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Appendix A: Letter of Consent

[Date]

Dear [Principal-participant Name],

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. I am studying how principals’ understanding of teacher leadership in theory and practice informs their efforts to support the development of teachers as educational leaders. I believe your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor who is providing support for the process this year is Dr. Angela MacDonald-Vemic. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My data collection consists of a 40 minute interview that will be audio recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you.

The contents of this interview will be used for my assignment, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a conference or publication. *I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential.* The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the attached form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your participation.

Sincerely,

Katrina Fleming
kj.fleming@mail.utoronto.ca
289-400-9369

Approved by: Dr. Angela MacDonald-Vemic
angela.macdonald@utoronto.ca
Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Katrina Fleming and I agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ____________________________

Name (printed): ________________________

Date: ____________________________
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this research project. The aim of this research is to explore how principals understand and support teacher leadership development. I want to remind you that I will be using pseudonyms and I will exclude all identifying features from the final product. Would you like me to share the final draft of my research project with you before it is printed? This interview will take approximately 40 minutes, and you have the right to pass on answering any question. You also have the right to withdraw from this project at any point in time before it is printed. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions

Section 1 (Who –Lived Experiences): Personal and professional background

1. Before we begin, I would love to hear more about your career path up to your current position.
   a. How long were you a principal for?

2. How long were you a teacher for? What did you teach?

3. What extra education, special training or professional development have you participated in to support you as a leader in educational administration?

4. Can you tell me about your leadership style?

5. Why did you choose the administrative path? What experiences or interests led you to this path?

6. What extra education, special training or professional development have you undergone to support you as a leader in educational administration?
Section 2 (What -Conceptualization)

1. What role do you think teachers can play as leaders in schools and the education system?
2. Do you think it is important for a teacher to demonstrate leadership? Why or why not?
3. Do teacher leaders have any characteristics in common?
4. Can you give me some examples of leadership practices teachers can engage in?

Section 3 (What/how -Practices)

1. Can you share with me an experience where you supported a teacher in developing their leadership skills?
   a. What inclined you to support that individual’s leadership practice?
2. What opportunities do you think a teacher has to develop their leadership capacities?
3. Do you face any challenges as you try to support teachers’ development as educational leaders?
4. What resources are available to teachers to enhance their leadership skills?