PERCEPTIONS AND ENACTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING IN NORTH CAROLINA

A Dissertation
by
CAROLINE SCOTT ARMSTRONG BEAM

Submitted to the Graduate School
Appalachian State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

December 2014
Educational Leadership Doctoral Program
Reich College of Education

PERCEPTIONS AND ENACTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING IN NORTH CAROLINA

A Dissertation
by
CAROLINE SCOTT ARMSTRONG BEAM
December 2014

APPROVED BY:

_____
Tracy W. Smith, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Dissertation Committee

_____
Carla K. Meyer, Ph.D.
Member, Dissertation Committee

_____
William M. Gummerson, Ph.D.
Member, Dissertation Committee

_____
Vachel W. Miller, Ed.D.
Director, Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

_____
Max C. Poole, Ph.D.
Dean, Cratis Williams Graduate School

Abstract

PERCEPTIONS AND ENACTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING IN NORTH CAROLINA

Caroline Scott Armstrong Beam
B.S., Appalachian State University
M.S.A., Appalachian State University

Chairperson: Tracy W. Smith, Ph.D.

The instructional coaching role has become a source of support for teacher professional development in districts across the United States, yet there is little agreement among researchers regarding the particular structure of this role. I conducted this portraiture study in three districts in North Carolina and used interviews, observations, and document review to determine how coaches, teachers, and principals understand the role of the instructional coach. The research questions used to guide this study were (a) how do instructional coaches understand their roles, (b) how do other education professionals understand the instructional coaching role, and (c) how does context impact understanding of the instructional coaching role. The portraiture methodology intentionally shifts from pathology to focus on "what is good here" (Lawerence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 9). I used the goodness criterion to recruit coaches identified as good by others in the educational community. I analyzed data first through open coding and then for repetitive refrains (Lawerence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 193) to create descriptive portraits of individual coaches. Finally, I created one, synthesized portrait of instructional coaching. Major findings from the study suggest that contextual factors

influence role enactment for an instructional coach. Results of the study imply that principals should bring clarity to the purpose of the instructional coach within a school setting. For a coach to feel successful, the coach needs a role description that is both focused and flexible. Results stop short of articulating a coaching role description; therefore, more research is needed to support how to describe the role in order to achieve both focus and flexibility.

Acknowledgments

To my Lord: for giving me the opportunity to make this journey and for the strength and perseverance to find learning through it all.

To my husband: for saying (possibly on a whim) "maybe you should just go get your doctorate while you're at it."

To Mama and Daddy: for praying for me, for encouraging me, and for being proud of every step I have taken during this journey.

To my family: for being patient with me when I did not join you for Sunday lunch, birthday parties, and family gatherings so I could go home and work.

To Dr. Vachel Miller and Dr. Kelly Clark-Keefe: for whoever suggested I should work with Dr. Smith. Your sense that we would make a good mentor/mentee partnership was perfect.

To Dr. Smith: for giving me feedback that tightened my writing and forced me to think about word choice, for encouraging me when I thought I might never make it to the end of this process, for providing ideas when I felt depleted, for attending to the product and the process with the utmost precision and care, and for becoming a friend through all of this.

To Dr. Gummerson: for providing feedback that helped improve my use of APA style and for helping me think about the school and district administrator audience.

To Dr. Meyer: for helping me appreciate the process that lead to this product and for suggesting I use Web of Science as a search tool.

To Dr. Miller: for exemplifying what it means to lead with an ethic of care and for helping me feel like a valued member of the Appalachian community.

To Susan Musilli: for answering all of my questions and responding to all of my emails so that the logistics were always managed professionally.

To Cinda Payne: for providing feedback on this product in the final hours; despite having never met me, you invested your time and expertise.

To my participants: for allowing me into your coaching worlds and school communities and for letting me learn with you.

Dedication

To my husband who saw this degree and this possibility for me when I could not even see it for myself.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Problem

In July 2011, I transitioned from teaching eighth grade Language Arts in a public school in North Carolina (NC) to working in a district office as an instructional coach. As a teacher, in my own classroom, I occupied a safe, comfortable space in a role that I understood and that was understood by others. Upon accepting my job as a coach, I had no orientation nor was I given a description of job responsibilities. My understanding of my role developed as a result of conversations with the two other coaches on my team. There were coaches for each major initiative in our district—content areas, Professional Learning Community (PLC), Title I, and English Language Learners. I worked as a PLC instructional coach, which meant that instead of working directly with teachers, I worked with facilitators who functioned as school-based leaders, assisted groups of teachers in further developing their content knowledge, and analyzed district benchmark data as well as teacher-made common assessment data.

I joined a team that had been established two years before. When the school year began, I developed my own schedule and tried to visit each school twice a month. I played different roles at different schools depending on the context and each facilitator's needs. At some schools I strictly played the role of observer; I would observe the PLC discussion and interaction while saying nothing. With other teams, I was incorporated into the PLC discussion process as a participant; I was actively engaged and involved in the discussions and decisions that the team made. In some schools, my role fell into an in between space where I was both participant and observer, joining the team to make

suggestions when conversations struggled and then stepping out of the conversation when teachers began talking.

My teammates shared that a central strategy they used as a coach was providing feedback to the facilitator regarding the observation. The feedback was intended to be nonevaluative, yet I struggled to see it otherwise. My teammates shared triplicate forms that were divided into two columns, one column was an area to note strengths and the other was an area to indicate weaknesses. I felt uncomfortable with the idea of providing feedback on situations that obviously required a rich understanding of people, histories, and contexts; the concept that all of a facilitator's work could be captured in a strengths and weaknesses form felt like a labeling initiative rather than a growth process. Since we had no strict parameters, using that form was optional. Over time, I worked to develop a method that felt less evaluative and involved questioning facilitators about their planning and their goals for each team. In traveling to various schools, my experiences humbled me and left me with more questions than definitive solutions for the teams. How could I expect to come into a school as an outsider and provide feedback on people and histories and contexts? If I had any reservations about what to say, I opted to say nothing. Instead, I listened, and I asked questions in order to try to understand more about the context than my short observation would allow. With each school and each context, I worked on a different timeline and waited until I was confident about my understanding of the contextual complexity before I provided feedback. The seed of this dissertation has grown from the premise that *contexts matter*.

As I continued with my work in the ill-defined field of instructional coaching, I longed for boundaries and simultaneously appreciated the vast freedom. I have had

training as a teacher and as an administrator, yet I had no preparation for the borderlessness that I now faced as a coach. As a teacher, I understood the boundaries of my job, and I felt I excelled within those boundaries by building relationships with my students, designing and administering instruction, designing and administering assessments, and differentiating instruction for my students. While I had never served as an administrator, my training taught me that the role involved instructional leadership, supervision of faculty and staff, and management of resources. Coaching involved pieces of each of those worlds; I felt I was, at times, teaching adults yet also supervising their progress towards an often nebulous goal. In fact, I remember hearing on multiple occasions from my supervisor that we "have to be comfortable with ambiguity." A new instructional coach expressed to me that she was also struggling with the ambiguity of the role—are we strictly supporting facilitators? Where does support for facilitators end and evaluation of their work begin? How does our role converge with the school's goals? How are we connected to the work that the principal does? My new colleague approached our supervisor to share her thoughts and to ask for an orientation to the coaching role. In a moment of unforgettable poignancy, our supervisor laughed and said, "I've never thought about that before." Providing clarity and purpose to the coaching role would have supported those filling coaching roles yet had not occurred to my supervisor.

Not only did my own experiences cause me to question what it meant to be an instructional coach and what my purpose in the district really was, but also my peers' questions validated my own concerns. In the fall of 2012, our district hired a new middle grades science coach with whom I had the pleasure of working on occasion. After nearly

a month of working for the district, we paused on a Friday afternoon to exchange small talk. He asked me if I had ever been given a job description, and he proceeded to share his frustration in not knowing what his role really was as he went out into schools. While I initially assumed my struggle with instructional coaching was some personal, internal malfunction, hearing another instructional coach voice tensions similar to my own helped me feel affirmed and less lonely in my struggle to understand this role.

While I continued to struggle with my professional role, I began to use opportunities in my doctoral courses to investigate the theoretical framework supporting instructional coaching and found that the ambiguity I experienced was confirmed in research that documented the underdevelopment of the instructional coaching role (Bean, 2009; Cornett & Knight, 2007; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Gallucci, DeVoogt, Yoon, & Boatright, 2009; Showers & Joyce, 1996). With my feelings and experiences confirmed by researchers, I wondered how districts justified expending resources on the coaching role.

In this synthesized portrait of instructional coaching, developed through observations, interviews, and document review, I created a portrait that represents the perceptions and enactment of the instructional coaching role as seen from instructional coaches and other educational professionals in three districts within NC. The purpose of this research was to (a) illustrate how coaches understand and enact the coaching role, (b) illustrate how principals and teachers describe the role of instructional coach, (c) illustrate which contextual features help support coaching, and (d) contribute to scholarship on instructional leadership in contemporary kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) public schools.

Discussion of Topic

Instructional coaching is accepted among researchers, professional organizations, and in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 as a form of teacher professional development (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007; Heineke, 2013; International Reading Association, 2006; Mayer, Grenier, Warhol, & Donaldson, 2013; No child left behind, 2004; Poglinco & Bach, 2004; Rush, 2013; Silicon Valley Mathematics Initiative, 2007; Tung, Ouimette, & Feldman, 2004; Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Walpole, McKenna, & Morrill, 2011; Walpole, McKenna, Uribe-Zarain, & Lamitina, 2010). Supporting teachers in their professional development is critical as Hattie (2002) demonstrated in his review of the literature and his synthesis of the research studies. He concluded that "expert" teachers help increase students' understanding and learning more than those teachers who are nonexperts (p. 5). He contended that "expert" teachers differ from other teachers, even experienced teachers, in "the way they represent their classrooms, the degree of challenges that they present to students, and most critically, in the depth of processing that their students attain" (Hattie, 2002, p. 15). Guskey (2009) also supported the importance of professional teacher development when he stated that "schools can be no better than the educators who work within them, and professional development remains key to educators' progress and professional growth" (p. 226).

While there is general agreement that instructional coaching is a legitimate form of teacher professional development, there is little agreement from researchers regarding the particulars of the instructional coaching role. Researchers agree that the instructional coaching role is not described or defined well for those filling the role or for others in the

educational community (Bean, 2009; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Gallucci et al., 2009; Poglinco & Bach, 2004; Walpole & McKenna, 2009). Further, researchers have shown that there is inconsistency in how instructional coaching is implemented (Bean, 2009; Cornett & Knight, 2007; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Deussen et al., 2007; Heineke, 2013; Neumerski, 2012; Rush, 2013; Smith, 2007; Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Walpole et al., 2011). While teacher and administrator roles have guidelines to provide direction for role enactment (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2012), there are no guidelines for instructional coaches. Instead, instructional coaches and the schools and districts that employ their services are left to figure out how to enact the coaching role depending upon contextual factors.

With no strategic focus, instructional coaching creates financial costs as well as opportunity costs for districts and states. Financial costs are the result of salaries used wastefully when the instructional coaching role is mismanaged. Opportunity costs reflect the potential gains that are not realized when the instructional coaching role is not utilized well and the costs associated good teachers leaving the classroom to pursue coaching roles. Schools and districts stand to lose both the financial costs associated with implementing instructional coaching as well as the potential gains from the benefits of instructional coaching should they fail to capitalize on the instructional coaching effort. Districts and states have struggled in lean budget years to keep class sizes down, purchase tangible instructional resources, and give teachers raises. In 2011 alone, public schools in the United States (US) faced more teacher layoffs than had been in decades (Dillon, 2011). With such scarcity of resources, schools, districts, and states have a moral obligation to distribute resources judiciously so that all children get the quality

education that they deserve. If districts cannot implement coaching as a mode of professional development in ways that produce positive outcomes for teachers and for students then districts will suffer both financial and opportunity costs.

Desimone (2011) indicated that each time the US enters a new phase of educational reform, systems are inundated with professional development needs. As districts face the reality of figuring out new standards, new assessments, and new accountability models, the need for effective professional development has never been greater (Desimone, 2011). Instructional coaching has emerged as a role where districts are willing to expend resources even though descriptions of the role may not exist or may be unclear. The US Census Bureau (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014) used the language of "instructional coordinator" (para. 1) to describe those filling roles that involve development and implementation of curriculum, including supporting teachers and principals in understanding and applying curriculum. In 2012 the US Census Bureau (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014) estimated that nearly 150,000 people filled such roles, and the "instructional coordinator" (para. 1) roles are expected to grow 13% in the next decade (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). However, the category that the US Census Bureau used, "instructional coordinator" (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014, para. 1), is broad and included "curriculum specialists, instructional coaches, and assistant superintendents of instruction" (para. 2). Understanding exactly how many people fill the role of instructional coach continues to be a challenge due to how the role is named and categorized throughout school districts.

The role of instructional coach is ripe for research that can offer description and definition in order to elucidate the fog that encompasses the instructional coaching field.

While research surrounding instructional coaching has grown in the last decade, the current body of work includes few studies that contextualize coaching (Gallucci et al., 2009) and few studies that use empirical evidence to gauge the impact of coaching (Gallucci et al, 2009). Research that contextualizes coaches' experiences will allow local, state, and federal policymakers to create and revise coaching models that are informed by lived experiences. In addition, research could be used to inform recruitment efforts and professional development of instructional coaches once hired.

I chose to situate my inquiry within three different school districts identified by informed experts as having reputable instructional coaching programs and coaches. Within each district, I worked with a single coach in order to create a portrait that provides a thorough contextualization of the role of the instructional coach. By working with individual coaches and examining their work, workplaces, and professional responsibilities, I was offered an in depth perspective of the coaching experience. Including coaches from three different districts provided an opportunity to expand the scope of this study in order to better understand how the role of the instructional coach was understood and enacted.

In this study of instructional coaching, I used interview, observation, and document review data to create what Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Davis (1997) describe as portraits. The portraits are a creation of the portraitist (researcher) as well as the subject and are meant to combine aesthetics and research into a form that "invite[s] dialogue with people in the real world" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 9). Portraits may take the form of stories, visual interpretations, or other artistic endeavors combined with more traditional elements from qualitative research (Lawrence-Lightfoot

& Davis, 1997). As both aesthetic and empirical inquiries, portraits are already situated on the periphery where "boundary crossing and improvisation" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 6) are invited. The pairing of the portraiture methodology with the topic of instructional coaching seems especially appropriate because both the methodology and the topic exist in between better-defined spaces and roles.

Research Questions

I used interview, observation, and document review data that I collected from each participant to construct portraits of each coach. I also used feedback from each participant to honor the values of dialogue and co-construction as part of the portraiture methodology (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The portraits captured how the role of instructional coach was understood and enacted in each school district through narrative descriptions. Included in each portrait are poems that I have written. The poems serve to distill the key elements of the coaching experiences for each coach and to incorporate an aesthetic blending of art and science, which is characteristic of the portraiture methodology. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do instructional coaches understand their role?
2. How do other education professionals understand the instructional coaching role?
3. How does context impact understanding of the instructional coaching role?

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) wrote that one important part of portraiture research is allowing the subjects "to feel *seen*" (p. 5). In this dissertation, the subjects of the research were the instructional coaches, and my purpose as researcher was to understand the various aspects of the role of instructional coach. As a researcher, I

developed relationships with coaches, teachers, and principals so that through data collection and data analysis I could develop a portrait that represents how the coaching role is understood and which contextual factors influence how the role is understood and enacted.

The first research question supported an examination of how instructional coaches understand and thereby enact their roles and was answered through interviews, observations, and document review. Previous research supports the assertion that instructional coaching is defined in a variety of ways and involves a variety of tasks (Bean, 2009; Cornett & Knight, 2007; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Gallucci et al., 2009; Showers & Joyce, 1996). Through this research, I created a portrait to examine how a role that lacks consistent definition is understood and enacted by those who work in the role.

The second research question provided the opportunity to see how school based administrators and teachers understood the role of the instructional coach. To add to the coaches' understandings, it was critical to learn how principals, those who make guiding decisions for schools, as well as teachers, those who should benefit from the work of instructional coach, understood this role. This research question allowed for comparison between how instructional coaches understood their role and how administrators and teachers understood the role. Analysis of both instructional coaches' understandings as well as other educators' understandings helped to inform the portrait of each instructional coaches and how the role was being enacted within school districts. Including these additional perspectives added to the dimension of the portraits and created a more

informed image. This question was answered through interviews with coaches, teachers, and principals and through observations of coaches working with teachers.

The third research question acknowledged that understandings are situated in settings and contexts. Understanding how context impacted the work of instructional coaching was fundamental to this inquiry. Contextual impact was examined though interview and observation data.

Purpose and Significance

The aim of this research was to develop "a clear picture" (Deussen et. al., 2007, p. iii) of those performing the role of instructional coach, which may, along with other researchers' quantitative and qualitative endeavors, add to a growing body of empirical research surrounding instructional coaching. In their work on school reform, Mehta, Schwartz, and Hess (2012) recognized that transforming our system cannot rely on a copy and paste mentality; rather, change must stem from analyzing what is working and making necessary adjustments for new contexts. Developing contextualized coaching research would allow for the expansion of exemplary practices that may become part of broad educational conversation. Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) wrote that, "there appears to be a general assumption that 'everyone knows' what coaching consists of, with vague notions of observing teachers in the classrooms and providing them with feedback about their teaching" (p. 154), yet "coaching is, in essence, different things to different people" (p. 155). Providing a synthesized description of the role of instructional coaching, its purpose, and how it is enacted can serve as the catalyst for dialogue about coaching models and can serve to align these models to coaching implementation.

Limitations

The portraiture methodology is intended to "blur the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience and organizational life" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. xv). As such, this methodology allows rich contextualized relationships to develop and even calls for the cocreation of the portrait. The importance of the context in creating the portrait inherently means that the findings may not be broadcast or copied and pasted into other locations without regard to the contextual factors. The portraits developed from this research reflect a network of relationships that connect the researcher to the participants and then blurs that boundary with "dialogue between the portraitist and the subject, each one negotiating the discourse and shaping the evolving image" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. xv). I have worked as an instructional coach for three years, and my experiences helped me to develop an empathetic regard for the coaches in this study. Because the portraiture methodology calls for the influence of the portraitist in order to give shape and structure to the body of work, I have been able to use my experiences to inform my research. While the portraits created from this inquiry represent specific contextual connections, the purpose of the research was to discover themes that existed within these contexts that may be analyzed in order to see how they may also fit into other contexts.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The research literature on instructional coaching includes a variety of methodologies. These findings have implications for a better understanding of the coaching role, the context in which coaching occurs, and the relationships involved in coaching. Moreover, some researchers have begun to build a body of research that examines the effects of instructional coaching. The body of literature classifies coaching as a form of teacher professional development, yet beyond that classification the description of coaching is highly variable. Turner's (1969) description of liminal spaces provides a rationale for the many themes that have arisen in instructional coaching research literature: "The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae (threshold people) are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states or positions in cultural space" (p. 359). Since the coaching role lives on the periphery of educational leadership, there is no one way to classify the complexity of the role. The research literature included in this review demonstrates the thematic breadth encompassed in the instructional coaching body of research.

In conducting this literature review, I performed searches of peer reviewed articles gathered from Web of Science (U.S., 2014) and Education Research Complete (Thomson, 2014) using the following search terms: *instructional coaching*, *literacy coaching*, *effective coaching*, and *effective professional development*. In total, I reviewed twenty empirical studies, three meta-analyses, three evaluations of programs, and

fourteen literature reviews. In addition, I reviewed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 legislation, particularly its implications for professional development and, therefore, instructional coaching. I used the theoretical constructs of liminality, borderlands, and role ambiguity to frame the literature presented in this review.

In the literature reviewed for this inquiry I included coaching, literacy coaching, and instructional coaching. While my research focuses on district instructional coaches who work in multiple schools within one district, the literature I reviewed cited both school-based coaches as well as district level coaches in order to draw conclusions and inform this research. I have extracted the following themes that reoccur through the literature:

- Coaching is a form of professional development for teachers (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Deussen et al., 2007; Heineke, 2013; Mayer et al., 2013; Poglinco & Bach, 2004; Rush, 2013; Tung et al., 2004; Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Walpole et al., 2011; Walpole et al., 2010).
- The coaching role is often loosely defined, broadly defined, or not defined at all (Bean, 2009; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Gallucci et al., 2009; Poglinco & Bach, 2004; Walpole & McKenna, 2009).
- The work of a coach is varied and context-dependent (Bean, 2009; Cornett & Knight, 2007; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Deussen et al., 2007; Heineke, 2013; Neumerski, 2012; Rush, 2013; Smith, 2007; Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Walpole et al., 2011).

- Trust, dialogue, and collaboration are important components in the coach-teacher relationship (Gibson, 2011; Heineke, 2013; Knight, 2007; Knight, 2011; Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Walpole et al., 2011; Walpole et al., 2010).
- The role of the building-level principal is critical to the success of the coach and the coach's work (Fullan, 2005; Neumerski, 2012; Rush, 2013; Walpole et al., 2010).
- The coaching role involves diplomacy with stakeholders at the school and district levels (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Gibson, 2011; Mayer et al., 2013).
- Coaching outcomes vary (Cornett & Knight, 2007; Deussen et al., 2007; Gibson, 2011; Hindman & Wasik, 2012; Marsh, McCombs, & Martorell, 2010; Matsumura, Garnier, Carrenti, Junker, & Bickel, 2010).

Liminality and the related concept of borderland communities provide a theoretical construct to understand the ambiguous nature of those filling the instructional coaching role. The findings that I have grouped into categories offer evidence of coaches who experience the role as one that exists in liminality or that lives in the borderlands. Additionally, the theoretical construct of role identity is used to analyze how coaches, while inhabiting liminal spaces and borderland communities, develop leadership identities.

Since coaching is a relatively recent faculty development model in the American education system, only a few empirical studies (Matsumura et al., 2010; Walpole et al., 2010) have been conducted to support the claim that coaching has a positive outcome on teacher development and student learning. At best, results on the outcomes of instructional coaching are mixed (Deussen et al., 2007; Gibson, 2011). Not only is

empirical evidence for the efficacy of the coaching model lacking, but also the understanding of what instructional leadership role coaches play is wrought with ambiguity (Bean, 2009; Cornett & Knight, 2007; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Gallucci et al., 2009; Showers & Joyce, 1996). Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) called attention to the facts that coaches were asked to perform many tasks and that "many coaches began without even a job description" (p. 169). Current literature supports the ideas that district instructional coaching roles are socially constructed and situated within a space where the boundaries of expectations become blurred; both may affect how coaching is enacted (Bean, 2009; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Gallucci et al., 2009; Poglinco & Bach, 2004; Walpole & McKenna, 2009).

Within this chapter, I framed the instructional coaching role as a liminal space (Turner, 1964) and as a borderland community (Anzaldua, 1987). Both theoretical constructs support understanding the ambiguity that individuals filling coaching roles experience. Then, I used the literature to demonstrate where the instructional coaching role is situated within Turner's (1964) stages of transition from a state of familiarity to a liminal state and then to a state of aggregation.

Instructional Coaching In Between

Anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep (1960) studied the rites of passage in the early twentieth century (1960). In his work, he researched how ritual behavior was connected to individual life and life within a group (1960). Van Gennep was the first person to acknowledge and research the stages of transition associated with rites of passage, and he identified three stages: "separation, margin (or limen), and aggregation" (Turner, 1964, p. 47). British cultural anthropologist and ethnographer Victor Turner was

influenced by Van Gennep's work and conducted seminal research in the latter half of the twentieth century in his anthropological inquiries in order to develop the rites of passage theory (La Shure, 2005).

Liminality. The term liminality derives from the Latin word, limen, which indicates a threshold; specifically, the bottom of a doorway that must be crossed to get to another place (La Shure, 2005). The first stage of transition was described as the moving away from a position and detaching oneself from the familiarity of the original position (Turner, 1964). The second stage was described as the liminal stage, which functioned as a rite of passage where "few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state" (Turner, 1964, p. 47) are recognizable. The individual has come to understand that the original position represented safety and comfort; however, he or she has not yet come to understand or recognize the unsettling nature of the new space and may fluctuate between being similar and dissimilar to the original position (Turner, 1964). In the third and final stage of Van Gennep's theory, the transition was complete (Turner, 1964). This third stage represents a place where the transformation of the in between stage has concluded and stability has returned (Turner, 1964).

The liminal stage is of particular interest regarding instructional coaching as it represents an in between stage. In practice, instructional coaches are usually teachers who leave the classroom to become instructional coaches. As such, they assume a role that is not administrative but still shares many of the characteristics and responsibilities of both the administrative and the teaching roles, and yet it is neither. Turner (1964) wrote that often the liminal stage might be literally or figuratively "invisible" (p. 47) to outsiders who are prone to "see what we want to see" (p. 47). Likewise, the role of instructional

coach has been, until recently, nearly invisible in the literature and remains obscure in its definition and description within school districts. As an educational leadership role, there is little consensus regarding the work and the priorities of the instructional coach. In practice, instructional coaches may be asked to observe teachers and provide feedback regarding their performance like administrators (Bean, 2009). They may also be asked to provide learning opportunities for all teachers in a school and to differentiate support based on skill level like teachers. Turner's (1964) description of liminality as an "interstructural situation" (p. 4) where an individual "passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state" (p. 5) can be helpful in understanding the characteristics situated around roles that do not fit into the traditional school leadership framework.

Turner (1969) defined liminality as a stage where a person is in flux between past experiences and future possibilities, and he specified that this "ambiguous" (p. 94) place applies to all crossroads in life including transitions in marital status, personal relationships, age, maturation, and professional opportunities. Based on the definition of being in-between, instructional coaches are in a permanent liminal state, neither teacher nor administrator, and yet they are also both. While coaches generally carry fewer responsibilities related to managing student instruction and behavior than teachers, they have not yet acquired the positional power or evaluative status of a principal, program manager, or superintendent. Due to these poorly defined boundaries, how the role of instructional coaching is understood and conceived may differ for various stakeholders within the educational community including coaches themselves.

Coaching role. In liminal stages the boundaries are not clear and the parameters are gray. Turner (1964) described liminality as "that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both" (p. 9). Bean (2009), in providing advice that coaches should "expect the unexpected" (p. 134), suggested that not only do coaches enter both welcoming and hostile schools, but also "school personnel, teachers and principals often have different perspectives about what coaching means and what coaches should do" (p.134). Gallucci et al. (2009) noted that the coaching role is "inherently multifaceted and ambiguous" (p. 922). The central themes from the work by Bean (2009) and Gallucci et al. (2009) pointed to the coaching role and those who fill coaching roles as inhabiting a space that is poorly defined and characterized by ambiguity.

Instructional coaching roles are poorly defined, resulting in an ambiguous understanding and highly variable enactment of the role (Bean, 2009; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Gallucci et al., 2009; Poglinco & Bach, 2004; Walpole & McKenna, 2009). Bean (2009) noted that many coaches were often "writing reports, keeping the logs required of coaches, spending time assessing students, and entering classroom data" (p. 135). Further, it was often unclear, as Gallucci et al. (2009) pointed out, if the coaches were in place to observe, model, co-teach, or plan, and even if all those modes of support were employed, the line between support and evaluation could easily become blurred based on perceived power (Bean, 2009).

Power. Knight (2011) advocated for support over evaluation saying in "true partnerships, one partner does not tell the other what to do; both partners share ideas and make decisions" (p. 18). Knight (2011) felt that establishing equality between coach and teacher helped to develop a trusting relationship. He contended that the idea of "status"

(p. 18) was what invariably impeded the flow of ideas and the progress towards improvement in the coach-teacher relationship. According to Knight (2011), in order to establish relationships, coaches must "relinquish power—and that's never easy. However, when we give up top-down power and adopt a partnership approach to interaction, we replace empty power that we get by virtue of our position with the authentic power gained through choice" (p. 21). While instructional coaches seldom have the positional power associated with supervision or evaluation, they may be perceived as having such power. Perceptions that relate the instructional coaching role to a role with positional power may stem from how coaches themselves understand the role and how both teachers and administrators understand the role.

Space. The conflicting perceptions of the coaching role as one of positional power may also come from workspace that is no longer in a classroom. Some coaches occupy office space at the central office, while others may have designated office space within schools. These spaces represent a shift away from the classroom and also serve as a metaphor for what it really means to be a teacher. Since district-level coaches are usually selected and assigned by the district and not by the schools, they are easily associated with those who do have positional power. Even coaches based at a school may become the intermediary between the administrators and the teachers (Brady, 2007). The liminal stage is further entrenched for those working at the boundary between district and school administration and with teachers, all of whom may perceive the roles and expectations of the coach's work differently.

Borderlands. In her lifework, echoing her own experiences as well as others in the borderlands, Gloria Anzaldua (1987) contextualized and personalized the lives and

realities of those living along the borders of the Southwest US and Mexico. She characterized the borderlands as a place where multiple cultures come together, where the "space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (p. i), where multiple identities have to be embraced (Anzaldua, 1987). Her idea of borderlands was born as a geographical construct but has now been applied and extended beyond geography to include all types of "crossings" (p. 6) that occur at the periphery of society (Anzaldua, 1987). Anzaldua (1987) asserted that those who inhabit la frontera are both insider and outsider and from that contradictory experience form "la facultad" (p. 7), which she defined as the "agility to navigate and challenge monocultural and monolingual conceptions of social reality" (p. 7). Those who have developed la facultad are able to see beyond the binaries that are often established within a culture that chooses to see people as either American or Mexican. Anzaldua claimed that those who inhabit a borderland become equipped with an agility and nimbleness to see and inhabit multiple cultures, contexts, and experiences.

While the naming may differ, many of the characteristics between liminal stages and borderlands are similar. Both Turner's (1964) and Anzaldua's (1987) conceptual ideas can be used to understand the role of instructional coach within current K-12 settings. While the borderlands can be problematic for coaches and can create a feeling of belonging to no particular area, Anzaldua (1987) provided a positive portrayal of those who inhabit the margins of society as resilient citizens who develop acute senses because of their ambiguous citizenship. The role of the instructional coach exists along the margins of educational leadership, and coaches inhabit their own La Frontera within educational structures and cultures. Loose definition and shallow description have

allowed the role of the instructional coach to live between borders, between supervision and support, between evaluation and professional development, and between hierarchical control and horizontal relationships. In addition, Anzaldua (1987) presented the notion of la facultad in her Chicana culture as an extraordinary perceptional ability to sense presence and absence. Rich portrayals of the instructional coaching role in context facilitate an understanding of how coaches experience the borderlands and how influences their work.

Stage 1: Moving Away From a Familiar Context Into Liminality

Turner (1964) described the first stage of liminality as a separation or moving away from a context that is familiar. Typically, coaches are chosen from teachers who have taught multiple years and have been recognized as outstanding teachers (Stokes County Schools, 2014; Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, 2012). Teachers who have become instructional coaches move from the familiarity of classrooms, students, and lesson design to a role that is less structured and lacks the security and comfort of a classroom and school environment. The singular, resounding agreement among all instructional coaching literature is the classification of instructional coaching as a form of teacher professional development (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Deussen et al., 2007; Heineke, 2013; Mayer et al., 2013; Poglinco & Bach, 2004; Rush, 2013; Tung et al., 2004; Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Walpole et al., 2011; Walpole et al., 2010).

Using Turner's (1964) theoretical lens of liminality, instructional coaches exist in a liminal space because the instructional coaching *role* exists in liminality. Beyond coaching as professional development, what the coaching role looks like and how coaching is enacted is diverse and variable across school districts. Without further

common classification, coaches have become "threshold people" (Turner, 1969, p. 359), filling a role that exists in a liminal stage.

History. Coaching began as a method of teacher professional development (Showers & Joyce, 1996). In Turner's (1964) work, a rite of passage, or transitional phase in life, is completed after an individual has separated from that which was once familiar. The classification of instructional coaching as a form of professional development offered a broad understanding of a new role, yet as the literature demonstrates the role is complex and context-dependent.

Peer coaching was one of the first iterations of coaching as professional development. Peer coaching was developed and researched by Showers and Joyce (1996) as a model to help improve teacher practice. They attributed the advent of peer coaching, one of the first coaching models, to be a response to ineffective, one-shot professional development models (Showers and Joyce, 1996). Joyce and Showers (1982) acknowledged five components of peer coaching in their work: "provision of companionship, giving of technical feedback, analysis of application, adaptation to the students, and personal facilitation" (p. 6). Using these five components, peer coaches worked collaboratively with fellow teachers to achieve what other types of professional development had often failed to achieve, transfer of ideas into effective classroom practice (Joyce & Showers, 1982). While Joyce and Showers (1982) helped initiate the shift away from traditional professional development modes to instructional coaching with their peer coaching research, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 had perhaps the greatest effect on instructional coaching prevalence.

On January 8, 2002, the US Congress passed Public Law 107-110, also known as No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Legislators created No Child Left Behind (2002) legislation that mandated that all children receive a high quality education and become proficient on state standards as assessed by state tests (No Child Left Behind, 2004). In subsequent years the law translated into a renewed emphasis on testing, data, and teacher qualifications. Moreover, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 provided funding for newly designed reading initiatives and indicated changes in how Title I funding was allocated in states and districts (No Child Left Behind, 2004). While instructional coaching existed before the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the role became more prominent as a result of the No Child Left Behind (2002) legislation that provided flexible funding to districts and ushered in the opportunity for instructional coaching to become a new and prominent mode of ongoing teacher professional development, inserting experienced, qualified, or credentialed individuals into the regular classroom and school day (No Child Left Behind, 2004). Coaching in its current form was essentially born from the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 legislation and has two specific applications: (1) as a specific angle of teacher development through Reading First and (2) under the broad shroud of professional development (No Child Left Behind, 2002). No Child Left Behind (2001) articulated that professional development should be "high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused to have positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and the teacher's performance in the classroom" (No Child Left Behind, 2002). According to No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, both coaching and high quality professional development involved scientifically based research on strategies and assessment within classrooms and ensured that those strategies

and assessments were aligned with state standards. Many districts used coaching as a mechanism to respond to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 professional development directive (No Child Left Behind, 2002).

Literacy coaching. Through Reading First, instructional coaching became more common as a mode of professional development for teachers in public schools within the US (Deussen et al., 2007). Reading First was created to help state educational agencies to develop scientifically proven literacy education programs, to prepare teachers through professional development to teach and assess students in literacy instruction, and to develop strong partnerships between schools and community programs to support family literacy (NCLB, 2002). Guidelines for implementing Reading First (*Guidance*, 2002) published by the US Department of Public Education, specifically mentioned coaching as a mechanism to support teachers' professional development. Reading First included guidelines and mandates for districts regarding instructional strategies, assessments, and professional development for teachers (*Guidance*, 2002).

Professional organizations such as the International Reading Association (IRA) (2004), the Silicon Valley Mathematics Initiative (2007), and the South Carolina Coalition for Mathematics and Science (Brady, 2007) all identified coaching as a means of supporting teacher professional development. The IRA's documents presented literacy coaching as a form of effective, long-term professional development (International Reading Association, 2004) and advocated avoiding "one-shot, workshop oriented" (International Reading Association, 2004, p. 2) approaches that often have little lasting impact on teaching and learning. Thus, the IRA (2004) indicated that coaching was meant to offer support for teachers in implementing both content and practice. The

following description from Poglinco and Bach (2004) was published in the IRA's coaching brochure (International Reading Association, 2004) to further clarify the role of reading coach:

> Coaching provides ongoing consistent support for the implementation and instruction components. It is nonthreatening and supportive—not evaluative. It gives a sense of how good professional development is. It also affords the opportunity to see it work with students. (p. 42)

The IRA used existing literature to frame literacy coaching because, as they acknowledged, there were no widely agreed upon definitions or descriptions (International Reading Association, 2004).

Science and math coaching. In addition to the IRA, the Silicon Valley Mathematics Initiative (2007) and the South Carolina Coalition for Mathematics and Science (Peters, 2010) acknowledged coaching as a form of teacher professional development (Peters, 2010). The Silicon Valley Mathematics Initiative (2007) identified instructional coaches as pedagogical content coaches and specified that "a content coach helps teachers to extend their understanding of mathematical knowledge, of instructional strategies, to assess student thinking and to develop effective lessons for all students in their classroom" (p. 1). While the national level science organizations have not published documents that guide coaching efforts, the South Carolina Coalition for Mathematics and Science (Peters, 2010) defined science coaching as a way to "engage educators in purposeful ways, to continuously improve instruction and accelerate student learning" (Peters, 2010, para. 1). Three professional organizations have described the instructional coaching role as one of support for teacher professional development in the

areas of content, instruction, and assessment. However, with descriptions and articulations of the coaching role occurring so rarely, more may be learned by what is not articulated than what is. If organizations have not yet begun to describe the role of instructional coach, then instructional coaching remains bound by misunderstanding, underdevelopment, and obscurity.

Teacher professional development. Through legislation, research, and professional organizations, instructional coaching has become an accepted form of teacher professional development (Brady, 2007; Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Deussen et al., 2007; Heineke, 2013; International Reading Association, 2004; Mayer et al., 2013; No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002; Poglinco & Bach, 2004; Rush, 2013; Silicon Valley Mathematics Initiative, 2007; Tung et al., 2004; Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Walpole et al., 2011; Walpole et al., 2010). Supporting teachers' professional development continuously impacts the work of school and district leaders as well as educational researchers, all of whom continue to pursue the key components to effective professional development (Guskey, 2009). Hattie (2002) reviewed over 500,000 studies and found that of the major sources of variance among students' achievement level, the most influential factor was the teacher. Hattie (2002) wrote that, "it is what teachers know, do, and care about which is very powerful in this learning equation" (p. 2).

While teacher development has always mattered, the sense of urgency around this development has reached a heightened state with the increased focus on accountability and proficiency brought by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. With each new standard or programming adoption, teachers have new bodies of knowledge to learn, master, and implement (Desimone, 2011). Desimone (2011) specified that teacher

development was the fundamental way to improve schools in the US, and each time our educational system has been presented with reforms, more professional development has been needed.

Effective professional development. Since the impact of the teacher is critical on student learning, teacher professional development deserves attention. As such, some research has been done to qualify the criteria for effective professional development (Guskey, 2009; Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Jenkins & Agamba, 2013). Jenkins and Agamba (2013) acknowledged that effective professional development includes focus on content, involvement in active learning opportunities, cognizance of the duration of professional development, collective participation from attendees, and continuity among professional development opportunities. They noted that some researchers also view alignment to curriculum standards as an essential component of teacher professional development.

Guskey (2009) also provided characteristics of effective professional development. A primary difference between Guskey's (2009) thinking and the Jenkins and Agamba (2013) theory was that Guskey (2009) suggested that measuring effective professional development may be gauged by determining how teacher learning is translating into student learning. Guskey (2009) cited the Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley (2007) review of 1,300 studies that found that only nine studies measured demonstrable impacts on students' learning, according to the stringent scientific measures of What Works Clearinghouse (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Guskey's (2009) narrative on the researchers' findings indicated that educational leaders have to be aware of context in a way that allows them to see what works elsewhere and identify "core elements…that contribute to effectiveness and then describe how best to adapt these

elements for specific contexts" (p. 229). Guskey's (2009) "core elements" (p. 229) for effective professional development included time, collaboration, school-based focus, and strong leadership.

In another research endeavor, Guskey and Yoon (2009) provided data on professional development that involved workshops and outside experts that had been previously criticized. Based on the synthesis of research, Guskey and Yoon (2009) concluded that while workshops can be done poorly, all professional development studies that met the measures for the What Works Clearinghouse (U.S. Department of Education, 2014) included some form of summer institute or workshop. Guskey and Yoon (2009) also noted that while much emphasis has been placed by professional development researchers and writers on site-based training completed by in-house staff members, such training may require supplemental development from external sources. Even though workshops and in-house training had a reputation of ineffectiveness in the world of teacher professional development, Guskey and Yoon's (2009) research indicated that workshops and in-house training did not necessarily lead to ineffective professional development. Rather, their research implied that how workshops and in-house trainings were designed and implemented determined their usefulness for teacher professional development (Guskey & Yoon, 2009).

Jenkins and Agamba (2013), Guskey (2009), and Guskey and Yoon (2009) established both the key components that inform the role and the best practices for leaders who opt to use instructional coaching in support of teacher professional development. Classifying instructional coaching as a form of professional development provides only minimal understanding and labeling of this role. Research indicates that

how the coaching role is enacted is variable and inconsistent (Deussen et al., 2007; Knight, 2007). Such inconsistency related to the role of instructional coaching requires both the role and those filling the role to exist in a space that is in between other well defined roles like teacher and principal. For those filling the coaching role, the first stage represents safety and clearly defined boundaries in their roles as teachers, but transitioning to the ambiguous coaching role creates conflict for those serving as instructional coaches.

Stage 2: Liminality and the Borderlands

Turner (1964) described liminal stages as spaces where the rules that once governed the familiar no longer exist. Turner (1964) described the liminal stage as borderless and as a stage that carried few characteristics of other phases in an individual's life. As findings have diverged on what role instructional coaches should play, how they should enact their role, and how they should work in deeply contextualized and dynamic settings, those filling instructional coaching role enter what Turner described as a liminal stage and what Anzaldua (1987) described as a borderland community.

Defining the coaching role. Overall, empirical research and legislation agree that the fundamental purpose of an instructional coach is to support teacher professional development (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Deussen et al., 2007; Heineke, 2013; Mayer et al., 2013; Poglinco & Bach, 2004; Rush, 2013; Tung et al., 2004; Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Walpole et al., 2011; Walpole et al., 2010). Despite this singular and unified purpose, descriptions of the instructional coaching role vary widely in the scholarly literature, thereby securing its liminality (Gallucci et al., 2009; Herman, Boruch, Powell, Fleischman, & Maynard, 2006; Knight, 2007; Marsh et al., 2010). The variation and

diverging thoughts on the role of instructional coach have allowed this role to enter and remain in liminality. Terms used to describe the instructional coaching role in the literature have included *mentor* (Herman et al., 2006), *collaborator* (Herman et al., 2006), *problem-solver* (Herman et al., 2006), *consultant* (Gallucci et al., 2009), *data expert* (Marsh et al., 2010), *partner* (Knight, 2007), and *teacher leader* (Gallucci et al., 2009). Some coaching descriptions fit relationship oriented approaches that allowed for what Gibson (2011) called "co-construction" (p. 14) of learning and goals between teacher and coach. Yet other approaches to coaching have embodied the characteristics of supervisory relationships as coaches managed the work of teachers and then reported to principals (Bean, 2009). These studies suggest that within schools coaches are performing many roles, yet some of those roles may undermine supporting teachers' professional development and may stymie efforts to build relationships with teachers.

The tasks that coaches performed fell into many categories—some were collaborative, some were supervisory in nature, and some even took on evaluative tones. The numerous coaching activities documented in the literature included *modeling lessons* (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Knight, 2007), *observing teachers as they delivered lessons* (Knight, 2007), *providing feedback to teachers regarding lesson plans and lesson delivery* (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009), *providing resources to teachers* (Bean, 2009), *assisting teachers in lesson planning and design* (Bean, 2009; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009), *co-teaching lessons with teachers* (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009), *creating conversations for reflection and dialogue among teachers* (Knight, 2007), *providing workshop opportunities for teachers* (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Deussen et al., 2007), *helping teachers understand and use data in their classrooms* (Bean, 2009; Denton &

Hasbrouck, 2009; Deussen et al., 2007), *arranging study groups for teachers around various topics* (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009), *completing documentation of work* (Bean, 2009; Deussen et al., 2007), *informing administrators* (Bean, 2009), and *providing interventions for students* (Deussen et al., 2007). The variance among role descriptions and responsibilities supports the application of Turner's (1964) liminal stage as an ambiguous stage where the boundaries of responsibility and role are unclear. Likewise, Anzaldua (1987) wrote that in a borderland community an individual embraces multiple identities, which could create contradictory and confusing feelings for the individual inhabiting that space between two worlds. As the literature indicates, instructional coaches fill may roles and perform many tasks, requiring instructional coaches to inhabit the roles of coach, teacher, and administrator simultaneously and to navigate the requirements for each role.

The work of the coach. Research supports the notion of the instructional coaching role in a liminal space. Instructional coaching has continued to exist between borders not just because the role has been described in highly variable ways and has incorporated many tasks but also because the role is context-dependent. Instructional coaches have navigated the complexities of place, relationships, and the dynamics between school-based administration and district-office administration. However, there is little consensus around how coaches can best support teacher professional development within schools. Literature supported the notion that coaches are doing many things and performing their jobs with much stylistic variation. To create and implement professional development for instructional coaches, decision-makers need information regarding how and in what areas instructional coaches need professional development.

Context. Because of the vast array of roles and responsibilities that comprise a job that may have no formalized requirements, the coaching role has been shaped by the context while the context has been simultaneously shaped by the coaching construct. Speaking to the Reading First coaching role, Deussen et al. (2007) "found that the reality of how coaches perform their jobs was more complex and varied than anticipated" (p. iv). The researchers went on to write that "although all coaches juggled multiple responsibilities and for the most part performed the same tasks, how they allocated their time across tasks and how they understood and described the focus of their work varied widely across individuals and settings" (Deussen et al., 2007, p. iv). Further, coaches in the study likened their experience to "building the airplane while flying it" (Deussen et al., 2007, p. 15), which seemed likely considering the poor job definition around coaching as well as the load of responsibilities that coaches often carry. As coaches enter schools and begin to build relationships with teachers, they may have little or no training, they may have no formalized job requirements or responsibilities, and they may be flooded with many informal daily tasks, like making copies for teachers. Job descriptions given to coaches may create liminality in that they are so broad that coaches are still left to make decisions about the coaching work with no framework. In essence a broad job description serves as well as no job description as both instances create vague or graying boundaries for coaches in enacting their role.

Variation. The variation in how coaching is enacted may well be attributed to choice or an influence of contextual variables. Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) identified one possibility for the variation in how coaches enacted their work saying role variation:

> May be exacerbated by the strong possibility that, due to the lack of well-defined and articulated models of coaching, coaches may well receive training from multiple sources, each of whom believe 'coaching' to be something very different. In such cases each training experience could emphasize different, and even conflicting, aspects of 'coaching.' Coaches who received the most training could thus end up being the most confused about the purpose and process of their roles. (p. 170)

Some researchers pointed to intentional professional development of instructional coaches as an area for future research (Gallucci et al., 2009; Gibson, 2011). Yet, to design effective professional development for coaches, more research around the role of coaching is necessary and requires understanding the purpose of the coaching role as an instructional leader within a school.

Coach-teacher relationships. The relationships that coaches build within the places in which they work add to the complexity of context as well as the ambiguous nature of instructional coaching. Finding balance between the borders of the spaces in which coaches work and with whom they work represents a dynamic and highly politicized arena. Further, for many instructional coaches that expansive political territory includes individual schools and the district offices.

With such a variety of contradictory and ambiguous roles and responsibilities, building relationships with teachers is challenging. In his research Knight (2007) championed the partnership approach to instructional coaching. The partnership approach is a support "method for planning and delivering professional development sessions in which memorable conversations take a central role" (Knight, 2007, p. 2).

Knight (2007) defined seven "Partnership Principles" (p. 31) based on the importance of relationship building between teachers and coaches:

1. Equality: instructional coaches and teachers are equal partners.
2. Choice: teachers should have choice regarding what and how they learn.
3. Voice: professional learning should empower and respect the voices of teachers.
4. Dialogue: professional learning should enable authentic dialogue.
5. Reflection: reflection is an integral part of professional learning.
6. Praxis: teachers should apply their learning to their real-life practice as they are learning.
7. Reciprocity: instructional coaches should expect to get as much as they give. (p. 32)

Knight's (2007) principles have put to work basic core values of giving teachers voice and choice in their learning and allowing them to grow through reflective practice that engages both the coach and the teacher. Likewise, Bearwald (2011) also focused on the long-term investment in relationships involved in coaching by saying "a coaching relationship isn't about providing a quick fix or a recipe for success. Rather, the most powerful relationships focus on reflecting, exploring, analyzing, and digging deeper into good practice" (p. 74). Much as Knight's (2007) principles emphasized collaboration and dialogue towards the goal of reflection, Bearwald (2011) too indicated the importance of reflection in order to support teachers in their long-term practice. No matter the goal or structure for coaching, Knight (2011) was quick to point out that the interaction between coach and teacher determined the fate of the coaching relationship. Knight's (2007)

approach to relationships offers boundaries that promote less ambiguity, but those boundaries may also present challenges if coaches work in schools that do not honor collaborative approaches.

Trust. In addition to Knight (2007) and Bearwald (2011), other researchers have found and documented the importance of the relationship between coach and teacher. In their review of literature, Walpole and McKenna (2009) selected 19 peer reviewed studies that provided new insights into coaching research. The recurring themes in those studies were (a) the coaching model guided the daily work of the coach, (b) the work of the administrators in conjunction with the coach was important, (c) the coaches were intended to serve the needs of teachers (though the work can be both productive and unproductive), and (d) the personal characteristics of the coach determined how the coach and teacher were able to work together (Walpole & McKenna, 2009). In describing the findings on the personal characteristics of the coach, Walpole and McKenna (2009) found that the theme of trust appeared in many studies as the necessary factor in the relationships between teacher and coach. The coach's ability to build trust with the teacher, allay fears, and help embrace new approaches was prevalent in the literature reviewed (Walpole & McKenna, 2009). From the literature, Walpole and McKenna (2009) noted that the coach positioning himself or herself as a co-learner with the teacher often helped build a trusting relationship.

Dialogue. While Walpole and McKenna (2009) found trust to be a significant factor in the relationship developed between coach and teacher, Heineke (2013) studied the dialogue between coach and teacher and how that dialogue affected the openness within the relationship. Heineke's (2013) work demonstrated that not only does the work

of coaches place them in liminality but also the style of dialogue can create a liminal space in the role of the instructional coach. Heineke (2013) interviewed four coaches, each working with one elementary school, analyzed their interviews using interpretive and structural analyses, and found that coaches often took a directive style with teachers. Heineke (2013) defined directive style as "a telling model of coaching, in which coaches tell about and/or model specific instructional methods with the expectation that teachers will learn and implement those same procedures" (p. 419).

Heineke (2013) categorized the discourse of coaches as one of "dominance, progressiveness, or responsiveness" (p. 421). When the coach's voice was prominent in dialogue with teachers and propelled the conversation forward, the discourse was characterized as dominant discourse. In dominant discourse, the coach was clearly a leader and the teacher a follower. In progressive discourse, coach and teacher had short interchanges and dialogue. Responsive discourse was used to describe dialogue where the teacher initiated dialogue with questions, thoughts, and comments, and the coach responded to the teacher's needs (Heineke, 2013). In Heineke's (2013) discussion of the research findings, she pointed to the need for more dialogue between teachers and coaches.

Knight's (2007) research found that when both the teacher and the coach entering the relationship as learners this helped to build trust. Walpole and McKenna (2009) found that trusting relationships were a key factor in the work of both teacher and coach. Heineke's (2013) research expanded on the previous evidence that the language and discourse embraced by coaches affected how the coach and teacher were able to build a relationship. If relationships are pivotal in helping teachers learn, and as Heineke (2013)

found, they are difficult to build, then the style that coaches employ and the discourse that coaches use with teachers may be elements of particular importance in future instructional coaching models.

Collaboration. Walpole et al. (2010) studied coach-teacher relationships and found that collaboration between coaches and teachers had positive outcomes in teachers' instructional practices. Walpole et al. (2010) studied coaching in 116 high poverty elementary schools; their research indicated that literacy coaches who were collaborative with teachers had a significant relationship with the work of the teachers, especially those in third grade. Additionally, "coaches who collaborated more frequently were associated with higher frequency of small-group work, effective reading instruction, and effective management" (Walpole et al., 2010, p. 135). Walpole et al. (2010) acknowledged that these results might be due to particular contextual features of the third grade team and that were not part of the research agenda, yet the evidence is worth noting as districts move forward in constructing coaching models.

Relationships. Relationships fit into the frame of contextual features that create a liminal coaching experience. The relationship between coach and teacher is shaped by the role the coach plays, which remains ambiguous. Given ambiguous footings, the relationships too live in a borderland (Anzaldua, 1987) that may require dual citizenship for the coach to function as a teacher at times and as an administrator at times. There are times, too, when the coach is called to be a learner. The coach then is left to navigate the space of the borderlands that is "neither this nor that and yet is both" (Turner, 1964, p. 9).

Role of principal. Research has demonstrated the importance of the coach-teacher relationship, yet navigating those relationships can be difficult due to school

settings that may be challenging and roles that may be unclear (Bean, 2009; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Gallucci et al., 2009; Poglinco & Bach, 2004; Walpole & McKenna, 2009). Yet the matrix of relationships is even more involved and complicated given researchers' findings on the importance of the principal on the coaching experience. Neumerski (2012), Rush (2013), Walpole and Blamey (2008), and Walpole et al. (2010), have all indicated the necessity of the involvement of the principal in the coach's work. However, Fullan (2005) has argued that principals who do not understand the principal role as an instructional leader within a school may undermine systemic change. Given the ambiguity and liminality that already exists around the role for the instructional coach, involving additional stakeholders with varying views and levels of understanding regarding the role, may further blur the boundaries around role expectations for instructional coaches, teachers, and principals.

Leadership. In writing about systemic change, Fullan (2005) reported that principals are counted on to be the instructional leaders within their schools, but many of them do not really understand what it means to be an instructional leader. Instructional leaders must know how their roles interact with a complex framework of other roles within the school building, yet that understanding alone is not enough. Fullan and Knight (2011) found that two sure ways to squander coaching was to have coaches doing the "wrong work" (p. 51) and to keep the goals unclear. Fullan and Knight (2011) defined "wrong work" (p. 51) as having coaches filling administrative and secretarial roles. To avoid those mishaps, systems need school leaders who are informed about coaching policies and practice. Districts need principals who can facilitate conversations with coaches in order to maximize the efforts of coach, teacher, and principal. Fullan (2005)

argued that systemic change comes from all stakeholders being informed and working together towards a common vision, and if one layer of the system is not working properly, that fault line can affect the whole system. With such a rationale, policy makers and instructional leaders in schools and districts need a unified vision for how to best utilize coaching efforts.

Understanding of role. Just as Fullan (2005) shared that some principals may not understand the role of instructional leadership within the school setting, Walpole and Blamey (2008) found that principals and coaches shared different understandings of the coaching role within schools. Walpole and Blamey (2008) conducted a two-year multiple case study to determine the roles that literacy coaches filled. Their results indicated that principals viewed the coaching role as one of mentoring and directing teachers (Walpole & Blamey, 2008). Yet coaches understood their role to be mentors, directors, assessors, curriculum managers, formative observers, teachers, and trainers (Walpole & Blamey, 2008). In their discussion, Walpole and Blamey (2008) noted that the reality of dual roles among literacy coaches was consistent with research that indicated content coaches and change coaches were serving schools in multiple capacities. The researchers (Walpole & Blamey, 2008) discussed how coaches and principals perceived the coaching role, but their research did not address why coaches and principals had different understandings and perceptions of the coaching role. Walpole and Blamey (2008) addressed the fact that coaches inhabit dual roles within the school and urged coaches and principals to work together to develop the focus of the coach in relation to the needs of individual teachers within this one school. Given the complexity of the instructional leadership role and the various needs and contextual

factors that support decision making, the understanding that exists from coach and teacher and principal can affect how coaching is enacted and received within a school.

Support. While Walpole and Blamey (2008) found that there are different understandings of the role of the instructional coach from the principal and the instructional coach, Walpole et al. (2010) established that the principal was a factor in the work of coaches within the school setting. Walpole et al. (2010) conducted experimental research in kindergarten through third grade at 116 high poverty elementary schools in order to measure which coaching techniques were related to high levels of classroom implementation of teaching strategies developed in the coach-teacher partnership. The results of the research showed that collaboration among teachers, differentiated support for students, and strong leadership at the school all had positive relationships with implementation of classroom strategies. Leadership at the school level predicted small group instruction and management for kindergarten, first, and second grades. Support for coaching in the study was measured by "the frequency of constructive collaborations between the coach and principal, active support for the writing of differentiated 3 week lesson plans, and participation in professional learning" (Walpole et al., 2010, p. 135). The interactions among the coach, the teachers, and the principal within the Walpole et al. (2010) study demonstrated the critical nature of building and sustaining relationships among all stakeholders involved in instructional leadership at the school level.

Rush (2013) found that with the support of principals, coaches became accepted members of the school community. Rush (2013) conducted an interview study of literacy coaches to examine the roles coaches filled in schools and which contextual factors played a role in the coaches' work. Using situational analysis, grounded theory, and

positional maps, Rush (2013) found that the support of the school-based administrator played a significant role in the work of the coach. Rush's (2013) research indicated that the coaches who worked collaboratively with supportive principals who looked to the coaches for leadership and advice were "deeply embedded" (p. 285) into the culture of the school and had many teachers who wanted to work with them.

Certainly, the role of school level administrators was a contextual factor that indicated how well teachers received the coaches that Rush (2013) studied, yet district contexts in which coaching thrives or fails were not included as part of that study. In her final discussion Rush (2013) wrote that "at the very least, administrators should support and direct the work of coaches in their buildings. At the best, coaches' involvement in school professional development should place them in a leadership position within the school" (p. 289). Certainly, the unique positioning of coaches as an intermediaries between teachers and administration should leave them well informed, but that position also puts coaches in a political position of liaison as well.

Best practices. As a contextual factor in a liminal state, the involvement of the principal makes an already complex situation even more complex. With Fullan's insight (2005) that principals were in different places in their understanding of their role as instructional leaders and that they understand the coaching role differently than instructional coaches do, creating a common purpose for coaches is both relevant and timely. Additionally, research shows that there are places where the coach-teacher-principal relationship is working to improve classroom practices (Rush, 2013; Walpole et al., 2010).

Neumerski's (2012) work pointed to an area for growth in educational research that may have far reaching effects for how the various leadership roles within a school could be better understood. In a review of literature on instructional leadership roles within schools, Neumerski (2012) examined the roles of coach, teacher, and principal and found that principal behaviors can either help or hinder the teaching and learning in the school environment. With a compelling argument that educational leadership continues to produce isolated bodies of research, Neumerski (2012) called for a more integrated approach to research that drops the boundaries between the coach role, the teacher role, and the principal role as all three must work together within the school context to help children learn. Neumerski (2012) used distributed leadership analysis to analyze "the connection among teaching, learning, and instructional leadership" (p. 316). In her review, Neumerski (2012) confirmed that principal support is conditional for strong teaching and learning within a school, yet she acknowledged that far fewer researchers have studied exactly how coaches, teachers, and principals are working together to improve teaching and learning. The relationship between the coach and the teacher may be a result of the style of coaching embraced and the purpose of the coach. Added to that complex and dynamic relationship is the role of the principal in the work of the coach. Meanwhile, coach, teacher, and principal may all have different perceptions of the purpose of the coach within the school.

Coach as diplomat. In traversing these complex settings, from the schools to the district office, instructional coaches often serve as an informal diplomat easing tensions between parties and negotiating deals between different stakeholders. Viewing the instructional coach as diplomat or liaison in a political arena was demonstrated in Coburn

and Woulfin's (2012) study where they found that coaches played both "educative" (p.19) and political roles in their schools. In their inquiry, Coburn and Woulfin (2012) used a longitudinal case study approach to determine whether literacy coaches were helping change classroom practice and, if they were, *how* they might be changing classroom practice. Coburn and Woulfin (2012) worked with one elementary school in Massachusetts for two years and focused their interviews, observations, and document reviews on seven first and second grade teachers, two reading coaches, and two school administrators. The study occurred one year before the Reading First initiative was implemented and included the first year of implementation of Reading First (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012).

Coburn and Woulfin (2012) defined the educative role as one that "provides practical support for implementation" (p. 17) of Reading First. In the "educative" (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012, p.19) role, coaches in this study filled the familiar roles of encouraging teachers to try new strategies and then helping them reflect on the implementation of those strategies (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). Coaches offered professional development, performed classroom demonstrations, and modeled lessons for teachers (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012).

Coburn and Woulfin (2012) defined the political role of coaches as one that involved "asserting and negotiating power in attempts to push or coax teachers to respond to Reading First" (p. 19). Coburn and Woulfin (2012) also described the role of coach as taking on three forms: "pressuring, persuading, and buffering" (p. 19). Acknowledging the politicized nature of the coaching experience, Coburn and Woulfin (2012) warned that:

> Coaches often find themselves in a difficult position because at the same time that they are asked to support teachers' self-directed learning, they are also responsible for getting teachers to implement specific instructional approaches that are advocated by the policy or school or district leadership. (p. 19)

Coaches often promote a variety of policies, programs, and initiatives. While the goal of supporting teacher professional development may involve collaboration and dialogue, Coburn and Woulfin (2012) have shown that support may also involve pressuring, persuading, and buffering, especially when implementation is involved. Coburn and Woulfin (2012) described *pressuring* as the times when coaches invoke power, usually power of those in administrative roles, to get teachers motivated to change their practice within their classroom. Coburn and Woulfin (2012) described *persuading* as dialogue between coach and teacher that avoided the use of explicit power. Coburn and Woulfin (2012) believed that the persuasive conversation was typically based on coaches convincing teachers that what they were being asked to do with Reading First was not so different from what they were already doing. Finally, *buffering* was described as coaches providing advice to teachers about which messages to pay attention to and which they might ignore (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). Coburn and Woulfin's (2012) research suggested that teachers working with coaches were more likely to change their classroom practice. Additionally, their (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012) research uncovered the politics of coaching and opened gateways for research into how power and support converge in coach-teacher relationships.

Coach as broker. Mayer et al. (2013) found that coaches often played the role of broker. In a qualitative case study, Mayer et al. (2013) studied three coaches working in

seven elementary and middle schools in order to see how coaches who were not based at one school created a Community of Practice. Mayer et al. (2013) characterized the work of the coaches as "joint work, brokering, or modeling" (p. 346) in order to build Communities of Practice within the schools in which they worked (Mayer et al., 2013). While joint work and modeling aligned with other descriptions in coaching literature (Herman et al., 2006; Knight, 2007), the work of the coach as broker is a less researched area that also alludes to the highly political nature of the coaching role. Mayer et al. (2013) described the brokering role as negotiating relationships with "district leaders who were accustomed to heavily influencing if not controlling how the schools made decisions" (p. 349).

The broker description parallels with Bolman and Deal's (2008) basic political assumptions in analyzing organizations from a political framework. Speaking to the political nature of organizations, Bolman and Deal (2008) wrote that, "goals and decisions emerge from bargaining and negotiation among competing stakeholders jockeying for their own interests" (p. 195). Bolman and Deal (2008) acknowledged that from the political perspective organizations are coalitions and members of coalitions have "enduring differences" (p. 195) that are often emphasized when decisions must be made, especially in times of scarce resources. Coaches are currently working in times of scarce resources within K-12 public schools in the US and particularly in NC (Kessler, 2014). Coaches visit schools to function as a liaison, brokering decisions between the district and the schools.

Mayer et al. (2013) suggested that the coach functions as broker at the boundary between school and district, makes decisions, and builds relationships with stakeholders.

The boundary between operations at the school level and operations at the district level is a symbolic boundary separating power and control of resources as a localized concept or a centralized concept. Bolman and Deal (2008) have acknowledged that boundaries are places ripe for conflict and tension, and coaches work on the border between localized, school control and centralized control.

With no clear role description, instructional coaches exist within an ambiguous space that relegates their work to context-dependent decisions. With people and their perceptions as well as place and its demands affecting the instructional coach's work, the enacted version of instructional coaching is complicated and highly variable. Within the liminality, coaches may support teacher professional development, but they may also serve as diplomats and liaisons between school communities and the centralized district office. Such a role involves collaboration and support but also pressuring, persuading, buffering, and brokering. The liminality of the role of instructional coach may be amplified and further entrenched as stakeholders struggle to understand the role of instructional coach.

Power. Using coach as diplomat and the coach as broker ideas to frame understanding the role and work of the instructional coach also involves power sources within organizations. Brokers and diplomats work within a political arena where decisions are made, and power is one catalyst to decision making. Depending on the context within which coaches are situated, they may be sources of power within an organization, they may be purely supportive, or they may be supportive and yet be perceived as powerful—all of which can affect the coach's impact and performance within schools and with teachers. Bolman and Deal's (2008) discussion of power within

organizations identified multiple power sources that can inform the discussion of district instructional coaches—three of which illuminate the discrepancy between different power sources. They identified "position power" (p. 203) as being associated with authority, evaluation, and control as is expected within a strong hierarchical organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Further, Bolman and Deal's (2008) power descriptions also identified "information and expertise" (p. 203) as a power that exists with those who possess the "know-how to solve important problems" (p. 203). Lastly, Bolman and Deal (2008) described "personal power" (p. 203) that arises from "individuals who are attractive and socially adept—because of charisma, energy, stamina, political smarts, gift of gab, vision, or some other characteristic" (p. 204).

The descriptions of the types of power provide frameworks for thinking about how perceptions of power influence the coaching role. The boundaries of job responsibilities and role enactment for coaches may lose focus ambiguous descriptions. For a district instructional coach, the powers of information and charisma have the potential to lose to the ever dominant force of authority and evaluation. As Bolman and Deal (2008) put it, "Conflict is particularly likely to occur at boundaries, or interfaces, between groups and units. Horizontal conflict occurs in the boundary between departments or divisions; vertical conflict occurs at the border between levels" (p. 207). While coaches may be hired to build relationships (Knight, 2011; Poglinco & Bach, 2004; Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, 2012;) and support teacher professional development (Bean, 2009; Bearwald, 2011; Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, 2012), the fact that their offices are near the district leaders and placed near the boundary of support and supervisor creates misconceptions regarding the work of the coach within

a school. Anzaldua (1987) dealt with borderlands in her work, specifically the borders separating the US and Mexico that are comprised of manmade boundaries to distinguish place, culture, identity, and belonging. For coaching, the borderlands have become a space where coaches cross boundaries and embrace multiple identities while filling an ambiguous role.

Organization. The familiar educational organization functions as a heavy hierarchical bureaucracy with superintendents at the top of the pyramid and classroom teachers at the bottom of the pyramid. Within this hierarchical structure, each level exerts some control over the next level—for example, superintendents typically evaluate, observe, and supervise principals; likewise, principals typically evaluate, observe, and supervise teachers within their buildings. However, the traditional mode of exerting positional power (Bolman & Deal, 2008) does not apply to the relationship between instructional coaches and the teachers with whom they work. Because the district rather than the school employs the coaches, the hierarchical description does not fit the relationship between principals and coaches. Coaches then, may fill a leadership role within districts, yet in many regards that leadership position may possess characteristics that are unfamiliar to coaches, teachers, and principals themselves creating an ambiguous and liminal stage.

DeRue and Ashford (2010) indicated that identity within an organization could be hierarchically or socially constructed, yet I contend that both the hierarchical structure and the social positioning of districts help to construct the role of instructional coaching. If an individual does not have an identity that is fundamentally endorsed by the organization or institution, which all too often is the case with instructional coaches, the

individual may develop a working leadership identity crisis. The instructional coach is forced to ask where he or she fits into the district's leadership hierarchy and what the intended purpose of the position is.

Identity. According to DeRue and Ashford (2010), there are three components needed to develop a leadership identity within an organization—"individual internalization, relational recognition, and collective endorsement" (p. 629). Individual internalization involves the identity becoming part of the individual's "self concept" (DeRue & Ashford, 2010, p. 629). Relational recognition refers to the reciprocal effect of having others within the organization recognize the leadership identity; and collective endorsement describes the process where the leadership or followership identity is endorsed by a collective unit within the organization (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Through such methods a leader may develop his or her leadership or followership identity. Likewise, the people within the organization may contribute to the development of a leader or a follower. Using DeRue and Ashford's (2010) approach, leaders and followers are developed through an individual's initiation, consciously or subconsciously, and by the people surrounding the individual.

In speaking to the need for instructional coaches adjust their role according to the context, Bean (2009) wrote that "coaches new to the school as well as those who have worked as teachers in the school each face issues of acceptance and credibility, and they must think about how to establish themselves in their new roles as coaches" (p. 136). As coaches enter into multiple schools under the guise of a role that may be loosely defined and for which they may be poorly trained, the construction of the leadership identity may be developed through the individual's own assertion of himself or herself as a leader.

Likewise, the individuals with whom the coach works may endorse either the leader or follower capacities within the coach, thus helping to create the coach's identity. As that endorsement takes place, DeRue and Ashford (2010) noted that once those leadership identities were "internalized" they often became a "static and enduring feature of the person" (p. 628). Leadership development may have implications for recruitment of coaches as well as their professional development, both how and when such development occurs.

Identities within organizations can be developed both through the structure of the organization or socially. District instructional coaches operate with little structure in how their roles are defined and described, how they are developed and trained to take on that role, and how their leadership role is developed through hierarchical positioning or a socially constructed and richly contextualized scene. Further, through their placement and location—having an office or cubicle at the central office, a badge identifies them as central office staff, and by entering multiple schools—coaches may be cast into a state of "neither this nor that" (Turner, 1964, p. 9). According to Tidd, McIntyre, and Friedman (2004) such ambiguity within organization roles can impact turnover as well as relationships within the organizational community as a whole.

Coaching outcomes vary. The variety of evidence regarding instructional coaching outcomes is reasonable given the highly variable nature of instructional coaching that exists as a liminal state. Walpole and McKenna (2009) acknowledged that the instructional coaching research landscape is incomplete, yet they also indicated that much of the research surrounding instructional coaching is "promising" (p. 31). Though there are few empirical studies that provide evidence for the outcomes of instructional

coaching, there is documented empirical research to support literacy coaching, peer coaching, and instructional coaching.

Executive coaching model. In their meta-analysis on the use of coaching in executive fields, Haan and Duckworth (2012) tried to answer the basic question, does coaching work? Haan and Duckworth (2012) reviewed only quantitative studies and found that, given two primary assumptions, coaching was effective. While executive coaching is contextualized differently than instructional coaching, these Haan and Duckworth (2012) defined the work of the executive coach as a leadership development process, which is similar to how instructional coaching is understood in literature (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Deussen et al., 2007; Heineke, 2013; Mayer et al., 2013; Poglinco & Bach, 2004; Rush, 2013; Tung et al., 2004; Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Walpole et al., 2011; Walpole et al., 2010). To begin their research, Haan and Duckworth (2012) framed their inquiry using two assumptions:

> In our view, the way forward for quantitative researchers in this field is now to assume what in our experience and from early research indications we sense to be true, that the general effectiveness of helping conversations as convincingly demonstrated in psychotherapy will also be true in executive coaching. If we then also assume that client's perceptions of outcome are indeed a meaningful measure of effectiveness, we can proceed by studying the active ingredients in coaching. (p. 8)

In essence Haan and Duckworth (2012) made the case for using psychotherapy research as part of a framework to think about effective coach-client conversations and the ingredients in those conversations. Further, the researchers (Haan & Duckworth,

2012) also assumed that a client's understanding of conversations, coaching, and mentoring was an acceptable measure for gauging coaching effect and for understanding which ingredients helped support effective coaching. In addition to finding that executive coaching was effective, Haan and Duckworth (2012) reported, that differing personalities between the coach and client; rapport, trust, and commitment; and coaching technique all were correlated with positive coaching outcomes. While such results were found in business coaching rather than instructional coaching, at least one theme threads the two together: trust is integral in the relationship between teacher and coach (Bearwald, 2011; Knight, 2007; Walpole & McKenna, 2009). Additionally, the research on executive coaching may provide areas of future research for those working in educational fields to study the ingredients for effective instructional coaching as well as ideas for other theoretical frameworks that may help educational researchers analyze instructional coaching.

Content-Focused Coaching. Matsumura et al. (2010) used a self-report mechanism to measure coaching outcomes. Matsumura et al. (2010) studied the effects of Content-Focused Coaching (CFC), which they likened to literacy coaching, in schools with high teacher mobility. In randomized trials that included 15 treatment schools and 14 comparison schools, Matsumura et al. (2010) used teacher surveys and observations and found that CFC schools reported higher quality instruction and achieved significant learning gains for English Language Learners in particular. Matsumura et al. (2010) urged future researchers to use randomized control trials that do not rely on self-report mechanisms. The research by Matsumura et al. (2010) indicated the need for professional development for coaches that addresses the contexts in which they will be

working. For example, the coaches in the Matsumura et al. (2010) study experienced schools with high teacher turnover, which necessarily played a role in how each coach might build relationships and help teachers to develop instructional strategies. Information about such specific contextual features might indicate what professional development coaches might need.

Cornett and Knight (2007) analyzed randomized controlled trials to measure outcomes for various types of coaching. Cornett and Knight (2007) reviewed the history of coaching, and categorized the types of coaches in the educational system as peer coaches, cognitive coaches, literacy coaches, and instructional coaches. Each of the peer coaching studies reviewed indicated that peer coaching had an impact on teacher implementation of strategies and content knowledge (Cornett & Knight, 2007). Cornett and Knight's (2007) review of cognitive coaching included over 100 dissertations, articles, research reports, book chapters, and presentations. Their (Cornett & Knight, 2007) review indicated that only a few studies demonstrated effects on the student-teacher relationships while many studies showed no effect on student achievement. In their review of literacy coaching, Cornett and Knight (2007) acknowledged the vast range of understandings of the coaching role, even saying that with the variety of job descriptions, they would expect the role to look very differently in different contexts. There was no evidence in randomized-controlled trials at that time to support literacy coaching. Finally, their review of instructional coaching offered one study that found statistically significant differences between two groups of teachers: one group that received instructional coaching and one that did not receive instructional coaching.

At the time Cornett and Knight (2007) performed their analysis, they found no empirical evidence supporting literacy coaching, yet Hindman and Wasik (2012) reported that literacy coaching had an effect on the environment and the instruction within the classroom. Hindman and Wasik (2012) conducted a two-year exploratory study to investigate if coaching was linked to outcomes for teachers and students. They (Hindman & Wasik, 2012) worked with 16 head start teachers, with 10 in the control group and six in the intervention group. Hindman and Wasik (2012) investigated language and literacy growth among the students. After the first year, Hindman and Wasik (2012) found that coaching was linked to the literacy environment found in the classroom and the teachers' instruction. In the second year of their study, Hindman and Wasik (2012) found that coaching was also positively linked to high quality instruction and increased student outcomes, especially in the area of vocabulary development.

While Hindman and Wasik (2012) analyzed the work of literacy coaches, Marsh and colleagues (2010) analyzed the support coaches provided to teachers. In their mixed methods study investigating coaches' intervention as data specialists with teachers, Marsh et al.(2010) reported empirical evidence linking the work coaches did to support teachers using data with teachers' perceptions regarding improvements in teaching and student achievement. The findings from Marsh et al. (2010) suggested that the coaches were helpful to teachers in understanding student data but also in strategizing which interventions might be best for students' needs. Based on their study, Marsh et al. (2010) indicated that future research endeavors should lean towards longer studies in order to gauge the effect of coaching over a longer period of time. The research conducted by Marsh et al. (2010) also highlighted the need to develop coaches for the roles that they

would be expected to fulfill. Significantly, the Marsh et al. (2010) study emphasized the need for coach professional development related to the expectations of the coaching role. For the coaches in the study, the work with data was a critical component of coach professional development. Practical implications from the study (Marsh et al., 2010) suggest a link between how schools and districts construct the work of the coach, how they develop their coaches, and also how higher education is preparing instructional leaders to take on coaching roles (Marsh et al., 2010).

Because evidence of outcomes tends to validate future support for programs, policies, and initiatives, policy makers have a vested interest in the outcomes of coaching, and currently the research on instructional coaching shows mixed results (Walpole & McKenna, 2009). However, Walpole and McKenna (2009) also said:

> To ask whether coaching "works," however important this question may be, risks a reductionist assumption that literacy coaching is a unitary construct, the effects of which can be studied like a vaccine or fertilizer. This is not the case. The roles played by coaches differ considerably across settings, and contextualized factors no doubt produce interactive effects that are important to identify. These conditions complicate the deceptively simple question of whether coaching works, and they make the results of individual studies impossible to generalize broadly. (p. 24)

While some themes emerged from research on the outcomes of coaching, those common threads must be applied cautiously to new settings to determine how other contexts interact with results. Transferring themes from research, like the findings from Marsh et al. (2010), that demonstrated positive outcomes when coaches helped teachers

understand data would mean further prying into past research to understand the how, where, and when surrounding the outcomes. Despite uncertainty regarding coaching outcomes, Walpole and McKenna (2009) were confident that coaching would continue to play a crucial role in education in the US as we move forward for two reasons: (1) there really is no other promising alternative in the area of professional development for teachers and (2) the evidence for coaching as a mechanism of professional development remains blurred, neither confirming nor disconfirming it as a viable possibility.

Stage 3: The Transition is Complete

With a lack of definition for the role of coach within schools and districts more research is needed to continue to develop an in depth and richly contextualized description of coaching. Gibson (2011) identified a research agenda that included the effect of instructional coaching on student achievement dependent upon the style of coaching utilized. Cornett and Knight (2007) called for more research around the structures that allow coaching to flourish, best practices among coaches, what professional development best supports building capacity in coaches, and the need for more research on the impact of coaching on student achievement. Gallucci et al. (2009) suggested that:

> There is surprisingly little peer review research that (1) defines the parameters of the role, (2) describes and contextualizes the work of instructional coaching, or (3) explains how individuals learn to be coaches and are supported to refine their practice over time." (p. 920).

Such calls for research provide an opportunity for employing Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Davis's (1997) portraiture methodology in order to create portraits

of instructional coaches to ascertain how the role has been defined by school district contexts. Contextualized descriptions of how the role is understood and enacted provide the opportunity to bring instructional coaching out of liminality and into an educational leadership space that is more commonly understood. Coupled with other research endeavors, the coaching portraits created from this study provide additional research that supports the development of the coaching role, the structures that support it, and the professional development needed for it to be an effective component of school-wide instructional leadership.

Chapter 3: Design

I value people's stories and their truths, and I want my research to honor that value. As a doctoral student, the journeys that led me to this project have also encompassed knowing myself as a researcher. Throughout my doctoral program readings, classes, and conversations I began to see myself early on as a qualitative researcher, particularly a constructivist or an interpretivist researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 2000). In my quest to understand myself as a researcher, I began to see that any research that I became committed to would involve people, their lived experiences, their varied contexts, and all of those respective complexities. As a doctoral student, I began reading about case study approaches until my research methods professor, Dr. Clark-Keefe, suggested that portraiture might be a better fit for me as a researcher and for my topic. In *The Art and Science of Portraiture* Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) described the value of connecting with both people and places through research, and I wanted to build relationships through this research endeavor. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) described relationships and contexts as the epicenter of the portraiture methodology. Portraiture resonates with my way of connecting to others and my way of seeing the world, and portraits of instructional coaches can potentially fill a gap in the instructional coaching literature where contextualized research is needed.

Portraiture

Definition. Hackmann (2002) described the portraiture methodology as a research genre akin to a descriptive case study with hints of impressionist tales and social anthropology. Likewise, Dixson, Chapman, and Hill (2005) recognized portraiture as a "blending of methodologies" (p. 17) that combines the empirical with the aesthetic. In her research putting portraiture to work in classrooms, Chapman (2007) wrote that "the portraiture methodology is used when a researcher wishes to produce a full picture of an event or person that tells as much about the subject as it does about the researcher, or portraitist" (p. 157). Describing the end product using the portraiture methods, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) explained:

> The portraits are designed to capture the richness, complexity, and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, conveying the perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experiences. The portraits are shaped through dialogues between the portraitist and the subject, each one participating in the drawing of the image. The encounter between the two is rich with meaning and resonance and is crucial to the success and authenticity of the rendered piece. (p. 3)

A relatively new inquiry process, portraiture borrows from other genres to bring together art and science in order to create a portrait that is rich in contextualized understanding of both people and places.

Another key feature of the portraiture technique is the intentional shift to avoid "tradition-laden effort[s] to document failure" within research (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 9). Rather, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) purposefully focused

portraiture on "what is good here" (p. 9), which they differentiated from "documents of idealization and celebration" (p. 9). The authors (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) clarified that the shift from "pathology" (p. 9) to "goodness" (p. 9) recognizes multiple perspectives and contradictory approaches in order to work towards understanding the developing portrait. Such a focus has utility in this project in that the conversations that occur should elicit honest feedback that works towards systemic improvement in educational conversations. My method for participant selection has followed the "what is good here" criterion as well. In the inquiries that lead to *The Good High School* (1983), Lawrence-Lightfoot chose participating schools by asking trusted educational professionals to identify exemplary schools. I used a similar method in identifying districts and participants for my inquiry.

Origin. In *The Art and Science of Portraiture* (1997), Lawrence-Lightfoot wrote in the opening chapter that already she had been "laboring" (p. 3) over portraiture for more than a dozen years. Her (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) thinking about the portraiture methodology evolved from two experiences where she sat for her own portraits—once when she was a child of eight years old and again as an adult in her mid twenties. From these experiences she reflected on the "power of the medium, about the relationship between artist and subject, and about the perspective of the person whose image and essence is being captured" (p. 4), and she wrote that those were her "first methodological lessons" (p. 4). Looking back on those two resultant portraits, Lawrence-Lightfoot felt that her adult portrait had captured her yet had failed to capture her. She reflected that the woman in the portrait "was not quite me as I saw myself, but she [the portraitist] told me about parts of myself that I never would have noticed" (1983, p. 4).

From her earlier portrait, she felt that the artist captured her essence and her movement while later in life the portraitist valued stillness and formality. She also noticed that both artists created different environments for the portrait, one that was fluid where the artist asked her to be herself (the earlier sitting) and one that was formal and required no movement (the later sitting). Lawrence-Lightfoot's takeaways from these experiences have become the pillars of the portraiture methodology, as she and Davis point to the importance of perspective, both of the subject and the portraitist: the richly contextualized nature of working with subjects, and the creation of an aesthetically pleasing whole (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1997) experiences sitting for portraits profoundly shaped her, and more than ten years later, she began looking for a research process that would allow her to "capture the complexity and aesthetic of the human experience" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 4). During the journey that lead to portraiture, Lawrence-Lightfoot was working on what became *The Good High School* (1983*)*, in which she created "life drawings" that drew parallels between "individual personality and organizational culture" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983, p. 4). These life drawings (which she later called portraits) were descriptions of public and private urban and suburban high schools. Each life drawing of a particular high school included descriptions of the context as well as participants. From observations and interviews, Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) analyzed data in order to identify the themes that resonated in all aspects of the school. For example, at George Washington Carver High School in Atlanta, Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) identified the theme of strong leadership that she felt pervaded all aspects of the school.

Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) worked with other researchers to create six portraits of different high schools, all identified as exemplary. The high schools differed by geographic location and diversity of student population, yet prominent educational leaders identified all of them as successful. Lawrence-Lightfoot wrote that she wanted the portraits to "tell something about the myriad definitions of success" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983, p. 11). To build the portraits, Lawrence-Lightfoot and a team of researchers visited each site individually. The researchers used no formal interview or observation protocols, but each researcher understood that the final product would reflect as much about the researcher as the schools. In their visits, the researchers sought "pieces that captured their lives, rhythms, and rituals" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983, p. 14) and from that data researchers looked for emerging themes. Chiefly, Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) "wanted to create a narrative that bridged the realms of science and art, merging the systematic and careful description of good ethnography with the evocative resonance of fine literature" (p. 4). While Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) is credited with the creation of portraiture as a methodological approach to inquiry, she maintains that she was influenced by over 200 years of work that span both art and science.

Application and use. The portraiture methodology has been used largely in social science endeavors that seek to "(re)present the research participant through the subjective, empathetic, and critical lens of the researcher" (Dixson et al., 2005, p. 17), but it could certainly be applied to any research agenda with the goal of joining the empirical and aesthetic to create a richly contextualized understanding *with* subjects. In addition to opportunities involving contextualizing research alongside participants, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) also noted that through developing unique portraits "resonant

universal themes" (p. 14) may be discovered which can be put to use and explored in other contexts. Hackmann (2002) wrote that the use of portraiture in educational leadership research might be beneficial for systems, schools, and leaders because it is written in a way that is accessible to educational leaders. Portraiture allows for connections with readers and audiences that other methodologies might not offer.

To create portraits, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) suggested collecting data using observations, interviews, and documents. In writing *The Good High School* (1983), Lawrence-Lightfoot did not use protocols to conduct her research, but she entered the schools looking for metaphors, rituals, and symbols. After her data collection, she analyzed the data and reported the themes that emerged. Using those themes, she created descriptive portraits to represent school communities.

Portraiture and instructional coaching. One strength of the portraiture technique is the value placed on the relationship between the portraitist and the subject in helping to create a meaningful portrait composed of resonant themes. Likewise, one of the themes in instructional coaching research was the importance of relationships to the coaching experience. Research (Gibson, 2011; Heineke, 2013; Knight, 2007; Knight, 2011; Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Walpole et al., 2011; Walpole et al., 2010) indicated that trust was a key factor in relationships between coaches and teachers, and findings also implied that coaching could become embedded into the instructional work of the school given the support of the principal. For example, Dillard (2006) pointed to relationships as a key factor in implementing change and wrote that "only within the context of community does the individual appear" (p. 22). Through listening to others, we are more affirmed and more fully ourselves. Awbrey, Dana, Miller, Robinson, Ryan,

and Scott (2006) pointed out that positivists and post positivist researchers have caused much of society to focus on statistics, numbers, and data solely at the detriment of relationships:

> So despite the greatly expanded scope of what this science makes us aware—galaxies, atomic particles, genes—our mode of being aware and being tend to contract and congeal. We no longer feel kinship with things as fellow subjects, no longer feel that we belong immediately together with them in the vitality and abundance of the Whole and its shifting ambience, its vibratory being, fellowship, radiance, its presence to us moment by moment. (p. 103)

In my work, I wanted to build connected relationships with the coaches, teachers, and principals to create the portraits represented in this project. I felt that by becoming connected to others, I could better understand their perspectives and the experiences related to instructional coaching. One of the founding elements of the portraiture methodology is the premise that the relationship between the researcher and the participants is valuable as the portrait build from the interaction and interplay between both the researcher and participant. The portraiture methodology pairs well with the concept of instructional coaching as research indicated that those filling the role of instructional coach work within a complex matrix of relationships between teachers, principals, and district employees (Fullan, 2005; Gibson, 2011; Heineke, 2013; Knight, 2007; Knight, 2011; Neumerski, 2012; Rush, 2013; Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Walpole et al., 2011; Walpole et al., 2010).

Context. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) noted the importance of context in creating portraits. Similarly, instructional coaching research has indicated that the

instructional coaching role and enactment of the role are context-dependent (Bean, 2009; Cornett & Knight, 2007; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Deussen et al., 2007; Heineke, 2013; Neumerski, 2012; Rush, 2013; Smith, 2007; Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Walpole et al., 2011). By using the portraiture methodology to investigate instructional coaching, I can understand the subtleties that uniquely affect instructional coaches in the districts in which they work. Deutsch and Krauss (1965) wrote that:

> More and more social psychologists, in the past decade, have turned their attention to carefully controlled laboratory studies, neglecting investigations of social behavior in natural settings…Often the light is brighter and vision is clearer in the laboratory; yet the remarkable things that people do as participants in laboratory experiments, to be seen in perspective, must be viewed from the outside. Knowledge must be sought even where the obstacles are considerable and the light is dim, if social psychologists are to contribute to an understanding of the human problems of their time. (p. 219)

In our world, studying any facet of the educational field can get messy as we shed light on people's real experiences, yet we must get out of the lab to capture the voices alongside the numbers. As a portraitist, I made plans and was prepared with guidelines, yet I allowed the context to determine necessary shifts in plans. Berliner (2002) explained that contexts are often the undercurrent to generalizability because all contexts to which the findings might be applied could never be considered. Giddings (2006) wrote that much research has "stripped away the context…the unique, the contradictory and the contestable need words not numbers to hold their place among the many" (p. 202). As these authors suggest, relationships and contexts help to create understanding

about the world. In research, the when, the where, and the who play a role in the data gathered, for as we seek out people's stories, lives, and realities, they are incomplete without the notion of their surroundings.

Portraiture methods. The portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) methodology includes building relationships with participants and also values the contexts in which those relationships occur. From analyzing instructional coaching research, I charted the prominent themes that occurred and found that relationships among stakeholders as well as the nature of the instructional coaching role as one that is context-dependent. Through portraiture I had the opportunity to search out the goodness in coaching and develop understandings by connecting with individual school districts and with instructional coaches, teachers, and administrators. Through these connections I developed a rich description and portrait of each coach's experiences in the instructional coaching role.

Like other qualitative methodologies, portraiture involves interviews, observations, and document review as data sources; Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) describe a flexible approach to research questions that might need to shift as research occurs; and portraiture (1997) includes having a conceptual framework in mind before beginning research. Unlike other research methodologies, portraiture intentionally focuses on creating a portrait in writing or through aesthetic endeavors that is readable, transferable, and understandable to audiences. Portraiture intentionally focuses on goodness to avoid negativity. While similarities and differences to other research approaches help me to understand portraiture, the methodology has limited examples in among the research literature. Therefore, my research not only adds to the body of

research on instructional coaching but also adds to the body of research that has put to use portraiture as a methodology.

Current study. Portraiture is a blending of qualitative methodologies (Chapman, 2007; Dixson et al., 2005). It was an appropriate methodology for my study because I wanted to bring the people filling instructional coaching roles to the foreground and tell their stories. The coaches' experiences in this study are voices that are rarely heard because they exists on the periphery of educational leadership and are not well understood. Just as portraiture represents a blended approach, I have created descriptive portraits of instructional coaches and utilized an aesthetic approach in creating those portraits by asking participants to express or describe their own symbol or metaphor for instructional coaching. I have also written poetry to accompany each descriptive portrait to distill the emergent themes from each coach's experiences. While Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) did not use protocols, as a new researcher and also as a fledging portraitist, I entered the field with flexible boundaries to guide these conversations. Portraiture's existence as a blended approach to research supports my conceptual framework of liminality and borderland communities. Just as a liminal stage or a borderland community often bears resemblance to other spaces which Turner (1964) described as "that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both" (p. 9), portraiture may resemble other qualitative methodologies, may use other qualitative methods, yet still exist as a different approach to research.

Methods

I began my research process by creating my research questions and designing which methods would be support creating portraits of instructional coaches. Once I had a

design plan in place, I requested Institutional Review Board approval (see Appendix A), and my research was exempted from intense review (see Appendix B). In the following sections I describe the procedures I used to create three portraits of instructional coaches, each from a different district in North Carolina.

Inclusion criteria. As there is no consistent formal evaluation measure for instructional coaches, to guide the selection of exceptional coaches for this study I used four criteria:

1. Instructional coaching is not perceived as punitive by the instructional coach. Much of Knight's research (2007, 2011) on coaching was based on the notion that coaching ought to be voluntary and a process where both coach and teacher agree to the cooperative effort (as cited in Price, 2013)**,** yet in my experience, teachers do not have the option of opting into or out of the instructional coaching support. Teachers are assigned a coach based on observations performed by the school principal. Those observations and assignments tend to lead to mandated coaching assignments involving teachers and instructional coaches who may not be willing or ready for the assigned relationship. Beginning the coach-teacher relationship as a mandatory assignment rather than an optional support system shapes how coaching is perceived and the impact coaching strategies have on teachers. To mitigate instructional coaching as an assignment rather than a choice, I sought instructional coaches who worked in districts where the relationship between teacher and coach was not punitive and allowed for collaboration rather than perceived (or actual) punishment.

2. The instructional coach works with teachers at a minimum of two different schools. My own experience as an instructional coach has been with more than 15

schools, and I am particularly interested in the understandings of the instructional coaching role when the role may not be an established part of the school fabric and is spread throughout the district.

3. The instructional coach has worked in the role of instructional coach for a minimum of two years within the same district. The inclusion criteria were selected to minimize the effect new coaches may have in building relationships and coming to terms with their new role. Therefore, I believe it is important to study instructional coaches who have at least two years experience in this role within the same district.

4. The instructional coach works directly with classroom teachers. In the research, instructional coaching and literacy coaching have been roles where coaches work directly with teachers to support teacher professional development (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Deussen et al., 2007; Heineke, 2013; Mayer et al., 2013; Poglinco & Bach, 2004; Rush, 2013; Tung et al., 2004; Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Walpole et al., 2011; Walpole et al., 2010). By using a similar framework for my participants, I am poised to add to the body of instructional coaching knowledge that already exists.

Recruitment of instructional coaches. To recruit participants, I first contacted an instructional coaching supervisor employed by the NC Department of Public Instruction and asked her to suggest districts throughout NC in which she believed exemplary and reputable instructional coaching models were being enacted. The supervisor suggested two possible districts. However, neither of the two districts she suggested agreed to participate in my study.

Next, I reviewed the forward to *The Good High School* to see what procedure Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) used to recruit her candidates. She recruited her six schools

by asking a variety of people associated with education which schools were successful. Then, I used Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1983) method, and I began asking a variety of school leaders from different districts to supply the names of coaches and districts where coaching was working well. From those conversations, I had two potential districts. Both of those districts granted permission for me to conduct research.

With only two districts recruited and no additional recommendations, I made a list of potential districts. My list of potential districts were not recommended by outside sources; rather, to accomplish my goal of recruiting a third district, this list was composed of districts that employed instructional coaches. I had six districts on my list, and I contacted each district to gauge interest in participating in my study on instructional coaching. One of those districts agreed and granted permission to work in the district. While the third district was not recommended by an outside source, I did explain to all potential districts that the purpose of this research was to uncover best practices in instructional coaching implementation.

To recruit participants, I sent letters to three coaches describing how my interest in instructional coaching led to this research, my purpose for this research, my research questions, and the methods used in this research. Then I followed up with the participants by phone or email and screened them according to the four inclusion criteria discussed above, assessed their willingness to be involved in this study, and answered any questions they had about the study.

After the initial screening, I sent each prospective participant a packet of materials including a document describing the research (see Appendix C), two informed consent documents (one to return and one for their records) (see Appendix D), and a series of

informational questions regarding their role as an instructional coach (see Appendix E). Upon receipt of the signed consent forms and the district agreement (see Appendix F), I scheduled three, one-hour interviews with three instructional coaches for this study. After choosing participants, I gave each participant a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality.

Recruitment of teachers and administrators. For each district, I recruited one teacher and one administrator to participate in this study. I followed a similar process to recruit teachers and school-level administrators to participate in this study. The inclusion criteria for teachers are listed below:

1. Teachers do not perceive instructional coaching as punitive.
2. Teachers have worked with the same instructional coach for at least one year.
3. Teachers have worked at the same school for a minimum of two years.

The inclusion criteria for administrators are listed below:

1. Administrators have worked within the same district or school for a minimum of two years.
2. Administrators work as an administrator at a school served by instructional coaches.

In continuing the search for goodness (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 9), I recruited teachers and administrators who were identified by the instructional coaching participants as exemplary. Then I contacted the teacher and administrator prospective participants to provide them with a letter (see Appendix C) describing the research study. After initial contact, I followed up with each possible candidate by phone or email to answer any questions regarding the research, screen them based on the above criteria, and

assess their willingness to participate in this research. Then each prospective participant received a packet of materials, which included a document describing my research (see Appendix C), two informed consent documents (one to return and one to keep for their records) (see Appendix D), and a series of informational questions (see Appendix G). Upon receipt of the signed forms, I scheduled one interview with one teacher and one administrator in each district. Each interview lasted no more than one hour. After choosing participants, I gave each participant a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality.

Data collection. Glesne (2011) encouraged researchers to slowly enter the research field and to carefully observe surroundings in order to avoid missing fine details. An overarching theme in Glesne's (2011) work is that qualitative research should "make the strange familiar and the familiar strange" (Erickson, 1984, p. 12), which requires moving gradually into the setting so it is possible to understand the strange. To make that familiarity strange again, researchers must challenge assumptions, conceptions, and ways of making sense of each inquiry.

Preparation. In order to practice observation and descriptive note taking, I piloted my observation and note taking with trusted friend who works as an instructional coach. As portraiture values the co-construction of the portrait, I observed my peer in her role, practiced descriptive note taking, and then asked for her feedback on how I captured the scene. Additionally, I practiced my interview questions with this coach, followed up with her after the interview to gauge her response to the questions, and asked her for feedback regarding how I captured her voice.

Observations. As part of my data collection, I conducted observations of coaches performing their role with teachers. Just as Lawrence-Lightfoot sketched the

"backdrops" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983, p. 6) for portraits of high schools in *The Good High School*, I contextualized each coach's portrait by describing the schools and districts within which the coaches enacted their roles. In creating *The Good High School*, Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) blocked out several days to go into schools to observe and interview participants so that she could eventually create portraits. She observed and interviewed during those days. To gather data, I also entered school to observe and then followed those observations with scheduled interviews with coaches, teachers, and administrators.

I used the observation protocol (see Appendix H) to conduct observations within districts. With feedback from my dissertation chairperson, I developed the observation protocol to meet my data collection needs. The protocol allowed me to script conversations I heard and actions I witnessed in the first column. The second column allowed for my reflections and reactions to the observations in the first column. The final column, in keeping with portraiture's co-construction values, gave participants an opportunity to reflect on the observations. After observations, I wrote my notes in the evening and emailed participants within 48 hours to ask for feedback and comments on my own thoughts and observations.

I kept a handwritten field log and then typed those notes up immediately following observations. Glesne (2011) indicated that quality descriptive notes should recapture the image even after leaving. She (Glesne, 2011) also noted the importance of factually describing what happened rather than capturing a qualitative assessment or judgment on events, people, or settings. Initially, the goal of descriptive note taking in observations is to create an artifact that describes the context. Following my descriptive

note taking, I began to comb through my observations to ask questions and to analyze what I observed. Wolcott (1994) suggested that through observations researchers focus on the big picture, nothing in particular, possible contradictions, and potential problems facing the group being researched. As I observed these instructional coaches, I was most interested in learning how their work was being carried out, and how their coaching was enacted within each district.

Interviews. Following each observation, I conducted interviews with coaches (see Appendix H), teachers (see Appendix I), and administrators (see Appendix J). I arranged for a series of three interviews with each instructional coach in each district. I arranged for one interview with one teacher coached by the recruited coach and one administrator who worked with the coach in each district. While Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) did not utilize interview protocols in *The Good High School*, I opted to create interview protocols to use as guidelines for these conversations. Given my position not only as a novice researcher but also as a first time portraitist, I have borrowed from other qualitative research methodologies to construct my interview protocols. Following Glesne's structure (2011), I developed what she describes as a semistructured interview process where I crafted possible questions in advance. However, those questions served only as a guide so that the cooperative development of a portrait of each instructional coach could emerge. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. After transferring my notes from my handwriting to an electronic document, I emailed my notes to the participants and asked for feedback. To honor the value of creating portraits from a collaborative process, I offered my notes to participants to ensure that I had accurately captured our conversations.

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) identified relationships as the point of origin from which all other processes in portraiture follow, stating that "through relationships between the portraitist and the actors the access is sought and given, connections made, contracts of reciprocity and responsibility (both formal and informal) developed, trust built, intimacy negotiated, data collected, and knowledge constructed" (p. 135). With such emphasis on the nature of relationships, the focal point of an interview within the portraiture methodology was much less formal and much more focused on knowing the participant. By developing relationships through the course of this inquiry project, my role as a portraitist became one committed to "complex truths, vigilantly documenting what supports and distorts the expression of strengths" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 159). Further, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis advocated for an empathetic regard for all participants, encouraging the researcher to truly try to see other points of view. A portraitist does not enter a setting, interview folks, and then leave. Rather, the relationship is much more complex and requires internal reflection in order to decide where to develop relational and personal boundaries.

As a new portraitist, I had to negotiate building relationships and partnering with participants. While I have read books on methods, I believe entering places and building relationships with the people in those places so that they not only valued portraits, but they also wanted to be part of the creation of the portraits was much more an instinctual process than a methodological procedure. My values as a researcher and the ethics that guide researchers (Steneck, 2014) to be honest, open, and transparent about the goals of the research helped me. My experiences as both an instructional coach and a teacher gave me credibility but were also the best preparation I could have had for navigating

spaces and meeting people in order to build genuine relationships. While my past experiences have not resulted in portraits, I have entered into schools as an instructional coach and was not part of the fabric of that school often with a goal that was perceived as one sided. Yet given time, hard work, and transparency, I have been able to build relationships and create common goals in which coach, teachers, and administrators have an investment.

Document review. In developing an understanding of the role of instructional coaches, I also reviewed relevant documents. These documents included public job postings and qualifications, resumes or vitaes of participants, and reflection documents from participants. The International Reading Association (2004) articulated clear guidelines for who should fill the literacy coaching role. Instructional coaching advertisements asked for teachers who had experienced success in the classroom and who were content experts (Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, 2012). Comparison of resumes offered insight into who is currently filling instructional coaching roles in NC and what training and preparation they have received. I reviewed resumes to gauge experiences coaches had prior to filling the coaching role, and I reviewed reflection documents as an example of coach-principal communication. I reviewed resumes and reflection documents that participants chose to share with me.

Preliminary strategies for analyzing data. While collecting data, I continuously wrote reflective memos and journal entries, which Maxwell (2005) wrote offers the researcher a chance to "capture your analytic thinking about your data, but also facilitates such thinking, stimulating analytic insights" (p. 96). Further, as I collected evidence through observations, interviews, and document review, I preliminarily analyzed data for

what Maxwell (2005) called "substantive" (p. 97) categories. He (Maxwell, 2005) defined substantive categories as subgroups of predetermined topics that may have been developed while crafting the research questions or through understanding the related literature. However, Maxwell (2005) also pointed out that substantive categories could not usually be predetermined prior to conducting the research unless the researcher has an extraordinary understanding of the setting and participants. The substantive development of codes or categories derives from the researcher's own thoughts and ideas and may help in developing a theory, but they are not necessarily dependent upon theory.

Coding. Following the preliminary analysis in which substantive codes were developed, I returned to the data to develop "theoretical categories" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 97) that may be related to existent theories or may support the emergence of new theories. While substantive categories originate primarily from the words and thoughts conveyed in interviews with participants, theoretical categories are a result of the researcher's thoughts and ideas applied to the interview data. Creswell (2008) referred to this process as a lumping together of like themes and beginning to group like and unlike categories. During this process the categories may be shifting and dynamic as the portrait takes shape.

Theoretical categories. To understand and begin to build substantive and theoretical categories, my process for data analysis began by highlighting recurring words and ideas in the data. Once words and ideas were identified, I charted the words and ideas looking for convergence and divergence. I created thematic groups that included multiple words and ideas. These groupings were the initial substantive categories. To create the theoretical categories that Maxwell (2005) described, I overlaid the data with

instructional coaching research findings and analyzed the information for thematic overlap and similarities.

Strategies for analysis. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) identified five different strategies for analysis in the portraiture process.

> First, we listen for repetitive refrains that are spoken (or appear) frequently and persistently, forming a collective expression of commonly held views. Second, we listen for resonant metaphors, poetic and symbolic expressions that reveal the ways that actors illuminate and experience their realities. Third, we listen for themes expressed through cultural and institutional rituals that seem to be important to organizational community and coherence. Fourth, we use triangulation to weave together the threads of data converging from a variety of sources. And finally, we construct themes and reveal patterns among perspectives that are often experienced as contrasting and dissonant by the actors. (p. 193)

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) analysis strategies were used as I analyzed the data from observations, interviews, and document review. In composing the final narrative, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) offer three considerations: how will all of the pieces fit together, how will I decide what to include and what to exclude, and how will I know when the whole is complete and cohesive. By analyzing the data for recurring themes and by triangulating those themes through co-construction, patterns within the data will emerge. However, if patterns do not emerge, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) have acknowledged that diverging stories are still stories that are worth telling. I used both patterns and diverging themes to construct portraits of the

instructional coaching experiences. Once the individual portraits were complete, I shared those with participants by email and gathered feedback by email (see Appendix R).

Ethical issues. To ensure ethical practices, I began by taking the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative for human subjects. I also read the ethics manual from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Research Integrity (Steneck, 2014). In planning my research, I thought through potential consequences of my work, and designed my research methods to balance risk to my participants with benefits to the research community. I educated all participants about the potential risks and benefits of this research and had each participant sign an informed consent document before beginning research. In order to protect my participants' identity, I used pseudonyms throughout my research process and in the final portraits.

Strike (2006) suggested that as an educational researcher, I am responsible for completing research that is objective and includes outcomes that have not been compromised. Part of these responsibilities also requires that results that may be negative, in my case results that may not present instructional coaching in the most positive light, should not be curbed. To help mitigate my potential bias, I employed reflective practice, which I describe more fully in the validity section.

Validity

Maxwell (2005) identified two varieties of validity threats for researchers: "researcher bias" and "reactivity" (p. 108). He described researcher bias as a researcher choosing data that fit predrawn conclusions that may coincide with the researcher's bias. Reactivity, according to Maxwell (2005), is the impact of the researcher's presence and views on the setting and participants, and he also explained that reactivity is not typically

as serious as other validity threats. As a portraitist (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), my presence in the work is necessary and acceptable, yet it is also important to call attention to my biases early and to describe how I plan to work through these throughout this inquiry process. My experiences as an instructional coach fueled my inquiry but also threatened my objectivity. In order to avoid allowing my bias as an instructional coach to be woven into the threads of the instructional coaching portrait, I wrote reflexive memos to scrutinize my own involvement in the research. Additionally, my methods of getting feedback on collected data and constructed portraits helped mitigate my own biases.

Maxwell (2005) delineated several ways to work through validity threats though he was also quick to say, "trying to apply all the ones that are feasible might not be an efficient use of your time" (p. 110). Maxwell (2005) described the collection of "rich data" (p. 110) as both "long-term involvement and intensive interviews" to collect data that "are detailed and varied enough that they provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on" (p. 110). Through my interviews with instructional coaches in different districts as well as teachers and administrators who work with the coaches, I was able to develop the rich, detailed accounts that Maxwell said would help counteract my own bias in the field of instructional coaching.

In addition to collecting rich data, I also solicited "respondent validation" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 111), which is integral to the portraiture process of co-creation. As I conducted interviews and began the processes of analyzing data, I received preliminary feedback from participants to ensure that the conclusions that I had drawn were in agreement with what they intended to say. Maxwell (2005) described this strategy as

> The single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstandings. (p. 111)

Following each interview, I corresponded by email with participants to review the evidence that I gathered. Finally, I used observations, interviews, and document review to collect evidence and analyzed each for "particular sources of error or bias" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 112) to validate the evidence that I collected through triangulation.

Researcher reflexivity and trustworthiness. As a coach, I have experiences that fuel my questions regarding my research, and by allowing that background to contextualize how I approached this work I have richly co-constructed portraits. Admittedly, my experiences imply a bias, but they simultaneously provide credibility to my work. Through reflexivity and transparency I gave voice to my own work and allowed it to advance the research that I conducted. As a researcher who has a background in instructional coaching, I practiced limiting my bias through journaling and writing reflexive memos (Glesne, 2011). Through practicing reflexive thought, I was able to arrive at more concrete ideas that could enter into each portrait. As I recorded my thoughts and made them concrete on paper, I was able to examine my preconceptions about coaching.

In addition to journaling and writing reflexive memos, I worked to analyze data through multiple perspectives, I collected rich data, and I used triangulation to resolve validity threats. In Lather's (1993) third frame for how to work through validity in a poststructuralist frame, she describes rhizomes as "systems with underground stems and

aerial roots, whose fruits are tubers and bulbs. To function rhizomatically is to act via relay, circuit, multiple openings, as 'crabgrass' in the law of academic preconceptions" (p. 680). Approaching validity rhizomatically meant that I shifted my perspective and took on different roles through different phases of research, which, in a very practical sense, helped me to see more of my own biases and shifted my own thinking about topics throughout the research process. In seeing participants' experiences differently, I then became more versatile in describing the many possibilities of each story. As I worked through the co-creation of each portrait with the participants, Lather's (1993) insight was helpful in bringing together my own knowledge and experience with instructional coaching, as well as the multiple perspectives of researcher: participant, observer, and co-creator.

Chapter 4: Portraits

As a research method, portraiture methods include setting as an integral feature in the entire narrative, it includes and allows dialogue and interaction among the narrator and the characters, and it encourages the researcher to find her voice to present the patterns and themes that emerge from building relationships with the participants. Portraiture is an appropriate methodology for examining coaches and how they implement their roles because context is critical in considering how coaching is enacted. Additionally, portraiture, like those who live in the borderlands (Anzaldua, 1987), inhabits multiple research genres, represents a crossing of science and art, and intentionally blurs the boundaries between the two. Similarly, those filling instructional coaching roles hover in the borderlands where they have moved from a teacher role into an ambiguous state. Coaches work on the periphery of educational leadership where the boundaries between administration and teaching are blurred.

Each portrait that follows includes literary and narrative components to foreground the participants' coaching experiences. The portraits represent the characters, their settings, and the patterns that exist in their coaching worlds. Within each portrait, I use poems to support developing an overall image of each coach and her work. The poetry included in the narratives reveals key aspects of each coaches' experiences in between teaching and administration.

To protect each participant's confidentiality, I have used pseudonyms for all participants throughout the portraits and poems. The participants include Jane Smith

(pseudonym), a teacher coach in a small, rural district; Ashley McBride (pseudonym), a district lead teacher in a midsized, suburban district; and Kate Overton (pseudonym), an instructional coach in small, rural district.

Jane: "We're in a place of growth"

On a warm, May afternoon prior to the much anticipated End of Grade tests, Jane Smith, a teacher coach for a rural school district, prepares to meet with third grade teachers to answer their questions regarding classroom instruction, resources, and assessment. Before the two-teacher team and the principal enter her coaching space, Jane makes sure her planner is out, her meeting notes are available, and the resources that the teachers have already requested are on the table and ready to go. As she finishes her preparations, one of the teachers that she is meeting with walks in and exchanges pleasantries with Jane.

Soon, Mr. King (pseudonym), principal at Walnut Grove Elementary (pseudonym), enters with notebook in hand. He offers a quiet hello and adds that the other teacher who is supposed to attend has another meeting requiring her attention. Mr. King makes a few general announcements: End of Grade testing will begin on Tuesday, the final testing schedule is being revised and will be released soon, the school has enough proctors to cover all testing sessions. He quickly moves through his agenda and easily passes the conversation to Jane before stepping out of the room.

Mrs. West (pseudonym), a first year teacher, asks Jane questions about testing her students. She asks about how to arrange the children in the classroom to avoid disruption, and she asks Jane about which teachers would be testing which students. Because Jane is not helping to create the testing plan, she is unable answer all of Mrs.

West's questions regarding logistics. Soon, Jane steers the conversation to instruction for the last week of school before testing begins. Together, Jane and Mrs. West discuss strategies and activities that are both engaging and instructionally sound for students. During the hour-long exchange, Jane and Mrs. West ask questions of each other and brainstorm together. Ten minutes before Jane and Mrs. West finish their time together, Mr. King quietly reenters the room and sits by the women without participating in their conversation. By the end of the meeting, Jane has ticked off the items on the document she used to plan for her meeting with the third grade teachers, and Mrs. West walks away with printouts of the End of Grade testing items that had been released as well as a breakdown of standards assessed on the test.

Place.

Walnut Grove	Keys
19 teachers	34 teachers
prime real estate	mobilized, hitch your trailer to the
community	wagon and follow office
free-ranging perimeters	Do I have a green card?
accepted identities	Am I undocumented in this space?
naturalized leadership	Teacher-Leader-Central Office-Outsider

Figure 1. This and that.

Jane works as an elementary teacher coach, another name for instructional coach, in a rural school system dominated by farmland and close knit communities. The district is small and familial; it is a place where everybody knows everybody. Jane works at two of the elementary schools in the county, Walnut Grove Elementary and Keys Elementary (Figure 1). Both schools are small by the state's standards, but Walnut Grove is significantly smaller than Keys. Mr. King has been the principal of Walnut Grove for

eight years, and he and Jane have worked together for all of those eight years. Mr. Vale has been the principal of Keys for two years, and Jane has been a coach at Keys for two years.

The district has had teacher coaches for eight years. Jane was one of the original coaches in the district, and she helped shape and form this role. When she was originally hired, Jane did not receive any kind of job description or list of responsibilities. When the district began to consider hiring instructional coaches, an administrator in the district approached Jane about filling the role of teacher coach. While Jane had no formal introduction to the role, the principals in the county were provided with some guidance in the beginning about how to utilize this newly minted position. Mr. King, the principal at Walnut Grove Elementary, said they were told "how not to use this position," in that principals should not have teacher coaches covering classes for teachers when they were not present, and that teacher coaches should not be filling front office roles when there were absences. Mr. King said the teacher-coaching role is "a pretty protected thing," and he attributed the protected status to the district's structuring of the job.

Like her counterparts, each of the six teacher coaches in the district serve two schools. The coaches allocate their time each week between the two schools. The schedule is arranged between the coaches and the principals. Jane typically alternates spending two days a week at one school and three days at the other. Mr. King believes that if a school has access to the coach daily for the entire year, principals and schools might fail to utilize the resource well. Mr. King believes that complete access to a coach creates less strategy and focus in how the coach is used at the school. By having to share

a coaching position, the principals and the teachers have to plan, think, and consider when and how the coach can be used. Mr. King shared that:

> When they're [the coaches are] having to serve more than one school, then their time is going to be really valuable. You're going to have to make it [the work of the coach] very clear, which they did, that this is how their time needs to be used and this is what you need to be doing with that.

Jane's work between two schools means that her time at each is limited, and in order for the resource of her coaching to be maximized, the principals and coaches need a shared plan for how they will enact coaching at both schools.

In Jane's district, when coaches enter their two schools, their work becomes a negotiation between the principal and the coach. Jane's work with Mr. King and Walnut Grove began with the coaching initiative in the district and has continued while her other coaching assignment has shifted during her tenure. In contrast to the sustained relationship with the principal and school community at Walnut Grove where Jane is a respected and credible member, Jane continues to compete for membership and insider status at Keys Elementary.

At Walnut Grove, Jane's office and meeting space for work with teachers is located centrally in the hub of one of the most frequently visited places for teachers during the workday; the office is nearby, the staff restrooms are close, and the media center is adjacent. Jane could step out of one of her doors to access kindergarten, first, and second grades in one direction and third, fourth, and fifth grades in the other direction. Jane's space at Walnut Grove is larger than many offices yet smaller than many classrooms; though the space appears to be both classroom and office—classroom

for teachers and office for Jane. At Keys, Jane's workspace is in a mobile unit located between buildings. Working in a mobile unit separates Jane (physically and psychologically) from the school life happening around her and may be preventing her from becoming an accepted member of the school community. When teachers want support, they have to come and find Jane intentionally in the mobile unit on her appointed day at the school. By separating Jane into the mobile unit, school leaders have symbolically reinforced her outsider status by literally keeping her on the outside of their main buildings.

In addition to her physical location and placement in the school, the size of the schools affects how Jane is able to enact her coaching role. Walnut Grove employs about 75% fewer teachers than Keys. The student population at Walnut Grove is half the size of that at Keys. Since the student population is smaller at Walnut Grove the campus is smaller and more compact. Jane's tenure at Walnut Grove also influences her ability to build and sustain relationships with the community, the teachers, the students, and the principal. Jane has worked at Walnut Grove for eight years, yet she has only worked at Keys for two years.

Jane cited the role of the principal as the "the single [biggest] factor to [coaching] success." Mr. King provides focus for the school primarily through his understanding of the role of principal as one that analyzes the needs of the school and helps to establish strategies to meet those needs. Based on test results, conversations with teachers, observations, and dialogue with the school community, Mr. King establishes goals for each school year and works with Jane on strategies to support the year's goals. Mr. King provided several real life examples of how the coach-principal relationship works to

support teachers, yet each of those examples was premised on the notion that the principal understands the needs of the school, sets priorities for the school, and then works collaboratively with the coach to analyze how they can meet those needs.

In the 2012-2013 school year, when the Common Core curriculum was implemented in schools, Walnut Grove focused on understanding what the standards meant. Jane's work included supporting teachers in grade level meetings and through personalized conversations in order to analyze the expectations set forth in the standards. In the 2013-2014 school year, Mr. King felt that teachers had begun to understand the language and expectations of the standards, yet teachers still needed to grow in how to implement the strategies that would best support students in reaching the new standards. With implementation as a new goal, Jane's work centered on modeling and providing resources. For the 2014-2015 school year, Mr. King determined that the school would work towards differentiation based on students' needs, so he and Jane created a plan for her work to support teachers in planning for every child in their classrooms.

Coaching works at Walnut Grove because Mr. King understands and enacts his role as leader by setting goals and providing support to reach those goals. He also has a vision for how the coaching role could help support and enact his vision for the year. Mr. King describes Jane's work structure as "focused flexibility" in that once they have a support plan, Jane has the flexibility to enact the plan with weekly, structured strategies like grade level planning, and she also has the flexibility to respond to needs as they arise. Jane characterized much of her work as responding to the needs of those who seek her out by asking for her help. Since Mr. King sets prioritized goals for the year, Jane works

in a flexible way with teachers, and she answers questions and problem solves based on the goals the school is working to achieve or on personal goals set by teachers.

One key component of coaching at Walnut Grove is the relationship between Jane and Mr. King. Jane remembers well the nervousness she felt eight years ago when she began working with Mr. King She said she had heard stories about him as a leader that made her nervous and apprehensive about working with him. Despite her early fears, they have built a relationship that both describe as respectful, collaborative, and trusting. Mr. King respects Jane as a credible and knowledgeable source who builds relationships with people so they trust her and want to work with her. Jane respects Mr. King as a knowledgeable instructional leader for the school. She has never worked for anyone who understands teaching and learning as well as Mr. King. The two have a reciprocal relationship; they depend on each other's help to fill personal and professional gaps. Mr. King depends on both Jane's charisma and her relationship with the teachers in order to help communication include all stakeholders.

The teachers often share their thoughts, opinions, and questions more freely with Jane than they might with Mr. King. Jane's role in the communication loop could be problematic in a setting not founded on trust and improvement. However, because the stakeholders at Walnut Grove, with Mr. King and Jane leading the way, are invested in growing as professionals and helping students learn, the teachers are not threatened by Jane's position as liaison. Jane readily acknowledges Mr. King's need for her relational skills at the school saying that she works as a "translator." Likewise, Jane, as a coach, needs the vision Mr. King provides as well as the accountability measures he offers as her supervisor. When Jane works at Walnut Grove, she and Mr. King communicate in

person, daily. They talk about what they have seen, and they share successes and growth opportunities they observe among teachers.

Not only does Mr. King have a clear understanding of roles at play in a school and a vision for the school, but he also helps to create a school structure that supports intentionality in achieving school goals. At Walnut Grove Elementary, Mr. King has established weekly grade level meetings where the teachers, Jane, and Mr. King sit down and discuss curriculum and instruction issues relevant to the teachers and their specific grade levels. In contrast, at Keys Elementary, Jane has no structured time to meet with teachers, so if they do not venture out to her mobile office, she does not see them. The time spent in grade level meetings is mutually beneficial. There is value in the meeting for teachers who may have questions and may ask for particular support, while Jane also shares resources, ideas, and suggestions. Additionally, the meeting structure symbolically asserts Jane's role in the school as one that is important, integral, and accepted. Meeting together is part of the culture of the school. Mr. King believes that part of getting people to accept the support of the coach, and Jane's support in particular, is that everyone must see that he values her support.

In addition to creating space and meeting times for collaboration and support, Mr. King knows that he must be present in many of the support conversations. He does not turn every single aspect of curriculum and instruction over to Jane; he maintains responsibility for the teaching and learning processes at the school. To support Jane's work in the school, Mr. King has to be present to listen to the discussions teachers have with Jane. By being present, he can hear conversations that influence visits to classrooms or conversations with teachers. For example, if the fifth grade team discusses strategies

for teaching fractions, Mr. King can look for those strategies in classrooms when he observes. He can also have conversations with teachers about implementing those strategies. The roles Jane and Mr. King fill follow a cycle where they constantly assess and reassess how they are working towards the school's goals. Jane's role as teacher coach is to provide strategies to help meet the school's goals. Mr. King also works on the strategic side but as the leader of the school; his presence helps reinforce Jane's work with the teachers. Mr. King is in and out of all classrooms in the school on a daily basis in order to observe and talk with teachers about how strategies are being implemented with the students. One fifth grade teacher said she was frustrated and intimidated at first when he was in her classroom so much. She had never worked for a principal who was so present in her classroom. Yet she also shared that she later "realized that's the way it ought to be done. Because he is so in touch with his teachers and with his students, that really allows Jane to do her job."

There are many features at Walnut Grove that set it apart from Keys in how the coaching role is enacted and therefore accepted and utilized as a support for teachers in the school. Walnut Grove has a centrally designated meeting space that Jane occupies. Walnut Grove is a small school with fewer teachers than Keys. The coach and principal at Walnut Grove have worked together for eight consecutive years and have established a trusting, professional relationship during that time. The principal at Walnut Grove understands how his role and the teacher-coaching role are connected and how these two roles affect the work of the teacher coach in the school. The principal at Walnut Grove sets a focus for his own work and for Jane's work and ensures that there is dedicated time for him, Jane, and the teachers to work collaboratively towards the goals for the year.

The factors integral to Jane's feeling of success at Walnut Grove do not exist at Keys where she feels like an outsider. Jane has no structured meeting time with teachers. The principal has not set priorities for her work, and he and Jane do not communicate on a consistent basis. At Keys, Jane experiences pockets of success with individual teachers, where at Walnut Grove the entire school community is working together to achieve common goals. Jane does not consider her work at Keys as a loss and certainly does not characterize it as wholly unsuccessful, yet she does see Walnut Grove as a prime example of what success can look like for a coach (Figure 2).

Buying		Selling
Pushing		Pulling
Teaching	Coaching	Leading
Credibility		Humility
Insider	Alienated Citizen	Outsider
Planning	Naturalized Alien	Responding

Figure 2. In between.

Purpose.

When Jane began as a teacher coach eight years ago, she had been a fourth grade teacher in the district. As a teacher, she had excelled and particularly loved teaching reading. She had often thought about working with adults and with curriculum, so when one of the district leaders approached her and asked her about filling a newly created position of "teacher coach," Jane was excited. Jane loved teaching students, working with content standards, and thinking about how to implement standards, yet there were aspects of being a teacher that Jane was anxious to leave behind: the bulletin boards, the constant grading, and the drama of working within a school. For Jane, the teacher coach

position allowed her to transition into a role that offered her the chance to continue with the aspects of teaching that she enjoyed and allowed her to leave behind other aspects that were less desirable to her (Figure 3).

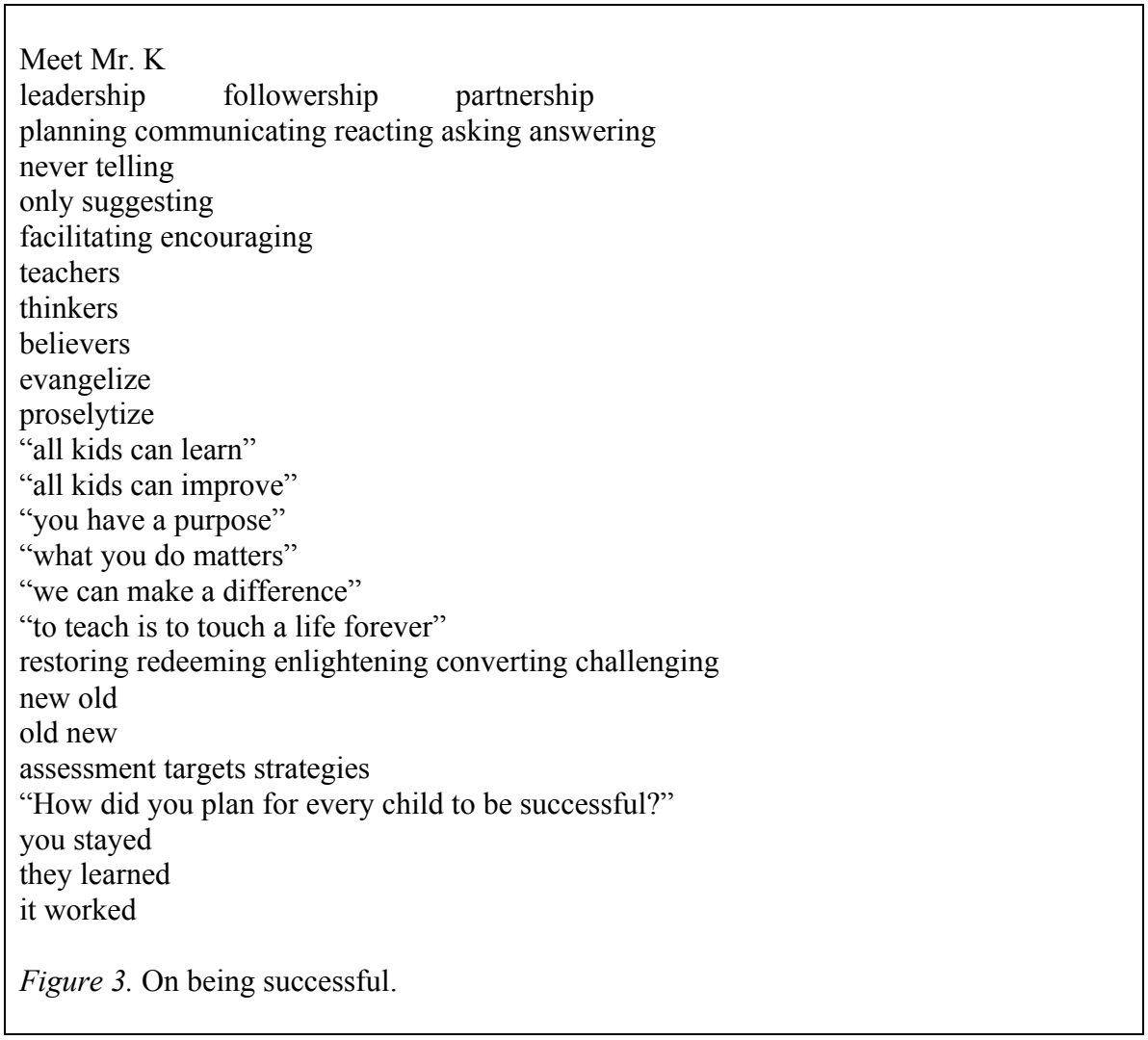

Figure 3. On being successful.

While Jane began her role with excitement, she also learned that there were no guidelines for what this new role would look like in schools. There were no parameters; there was no job description, and she did not even get a sense of what her responsibilities were. As one of the original coaches in the district, Jane used the complication of having

no parameters as an opportunity to help develop the teacher coach role. Jane enacted a coaching framework primarily based on building relationships with others and honoring them as equals in the learning process. Jane does not claim to know everything about all content areas, but she believes that collaboration and dialogue can help teachers grow and can therefore help students grow.

For Jane, enacting the coaching role for means that she is supporting Mr. King's vision for the school year while also responding to teacher needs. Additionally, in the last several years, Jane has felt the impact of statewide policies and legislation influencing her work with teachers as she has spent much time translating and implementing legislation. Supporting teachers in working towards the goal established for the school year means that Jane often fills the role of a broker. She works with both teachers and Mr. King to get results that meet all parties' needs. As broker she is in the middle, pulled between Mr. King and his goals and focus and the teachers who are overwhelmed with the daily concerns of students' behavioral issues and learning goals. In speaking to brokering and working in between, Jane said "We're not the teacher and we're not the administrator, but there's a real need for that middleman because if I wasn't here, then he [Mr. King] would convey it [the message] to them in some way that would come across wrong and not his original intention." Because Jane has worked as a teacher and shares the teachers' perspectives, she is able to communicate messages to the teachers in ways that consider the principal's goals but also the readiness of the teachers. Brokering (Mayer et al., 2013), filtering, and translating are ways Jane advocates for teachers as they work towards the school wide goal. She negotiates conversations so

teachers hear what they need to hear in ways that make sense to them. Likewise, she carries messages back to Mr. King so he can understand the teachers' thinking.

In addition to filling her role as broker (Mayer et al., 2013), Jane is often enacting her role through other strategies like modeling lessons, having conversations at grade level meetings, having individual conversations with teachers, gathering materials, and analyzing data. Jane accesses many strategies in brokering and translating the goal the principal sets forth. Recently, Jane realized that brokering also required selling an idea, and while she is not completely comfortable with that role, it is one she occasionally has to fill:

> I have found myself in some meetings where I'm having to sell—not a program, but practices. My husband and I were watching *Inside the Actor's Studio*. One of the last questions they asked the actor was "what would be your nightmare job?" The first thing that popped into my mind was salesperson.…I can't imagine pressuring somebody into buying something. But then I thought, that's what I am.

Jane never communicated that she did not enjoy her job. In fact, she always seemed like she was excited and challenged by her role as a teacher coach. Yet she also realized that by enacting the principal's vision, she was selling something to the teachers. Jane utilizes various tactics in her brokering (Mayer et al., 2013) at Walnut Grove, yet her work is centrally focused on supporting the principal's vision for the school.

While Jane's work is grounded in the vision Mr. King initiates for each school year, but she always takes time to respond to the needs of the teachers around her. She balances her plans for the week with teachers' needs that arise on a daily basis by

documenting her plans in a calendar and keeping a running list of teachers' needs. Their needs trump all other planned activities. Jane shared that she started "everyday with a plan of how to catch up [accomplish all goals for the day], but then, there are no two days that are alike."

Jane explained that she follows a Jim Knight (2007) model of coaching where she primarily focuses on building relationships with teachers, and she also follows one of his core features of coaching, which Jane described by saying "I start with those who seek me out." While Jane negotiates and brokers ideas, she does not have to sell people on working with her. She meets with all teachers at grade level meetings, but she also meets with teachers if they ask for her help. Because working with Jane is not punitive and stems from teachers' requests, Jane does not have to sell herself as a coach to others. She can allow teachers to come to her, building a relationship based on equality (another value Jane has taken and enacted from Jim Knight's work).

One teacher shared that she had worked as a fifth grade teacher during the 2012-2013 school year and felt like she was asking students to complete activities, but that those activities were not transferring to student learning. She felt there was a lack of strategic implementation in how she was helping her students learn the Common Core standards. Comparing the 2013-1014 school year to the previous (2012-2013) school year, the teacher said:

> I feel like this year [2013-2014] my instruction had a focus and had a direction, and because of the resources that my teacher coach provided for me, I felt like I was providing more opportunities for mastery and more opportunities for deep understanding.

Because Jane works with those who seek her out, trust her insight, and believe she is competent, she has been able to establish herself as a credible support for teachers.

The coaches in this district are often tapped as additional resources to support a small central administration. Along with other coaches, Jane is often called on to help district leaders understand state mandates and policies. She is then commissioned as a resource to carry those policies into the schools. During the 2013-2014 school year, all schools had to implement the Read to Achieve legislation (Excellent Public Schools Act, 2013), which was developed to help all third graders reach grade level in reading. If students did not pass the state reading test, they were required to attend summer camp to help improve their reading skills. This legislation affected Jane's workload in the 2013-2014 school year as she worked to develop more benchmark assessments at the district level and also spent more time analyzing data to see which students were on grade level and which students needed additional support.

In 2012-2013, the state adopted new standards where Jane had to spend time aligning resources with those standards and developing appropriate assessments for those standards. Policy and legislation changes from the Department of Public Instruction translate into less time in classrooms for Jane because "I feel like more and more I'm interpreting, interpreting, interpreting mandates and county initiatives…[and spending] less [time] in the classrooms because the standards switched, so I've had to spend the past few years interpreting standards." State policy and mandates often eclipse Jane's efforts to support teachers based on their personalized needs and school wide goals.

Preparation.

Ready-set-go where?
but coach kindly
don't be a friend
be friendly
meekly competent
make me believe that you're meek, humble
you know enough to answer my questions
approachable foreigner
enchanted likability
you did everything you said you'd do
you kept my faults in confidence
you helped me forget your central office status
you became real
no longer alien
when my kids were sick you asked
when I wanted to quit, you understood
everyday you smiled
I grew confident enough to take a risk, to be wrong, and fall into your safety net.

Figure 4. Making progress.

As a coach Jane is radiant and likable (Figure 4). At Walnut Grove she has connected with both teachers and the principal in such a way that they welcome her visits and want to work with her. To have others willing to work with her she has needed to establish trust with those in her school, and she has had to prove herself credible and competent. Jane's trust and credibility with teachers comes from maintaining perspective and performing with competence. Jane has worked as a coach for eight years, yet she has not lost the teacher perspective that gives her credibility with teachers. Likewise, her teacher perspective gives her credibility with Mr. King as he relies on her to share an elementary teacher's vantage point on issues.

When Jane works with teachers, her first response is to consider what she would do as a teacher in a given situation. Part of what helps Jane maintain her teacher point of

view even though she has not been a teacher for eight years is that her first consideration in making any decision is: "What is best for students?" As she works with teachers in grade level meetings and in personal coaching sessions, she does not work to fit a predetermined solution on to situation. In fact she said, "Being able to get in the midst of a situation and feel with the other person and, and really see things from different sides" is critical. Because she works to support the principal's goals at Walnut Grove and the teachers' needs, she has the flexibility to respond to situations with the wisdom of a veteran teacher. And because Mr. King trusts her in the role of teacher coach, Jane can answer teachers' questions and support them in problem solving from her teacher self rather than any other point of view.

In speaking to the need to have Jane share a teacher's point of view, Mr. King said, "She can tell me the perspective that she sees things, which is really good because I've never been an elementary teacher. There is no way that I can have that true perspective." By connecting with teachers through this shared perspective, teachers can trust that Jane is working towards the same goals that they are. Mrs. Joyce (pseudonym), a teacher who works with Jane, shared that at first she struggled to trust Jane, believing that she was like all the other central office people who do not understand what it means to be a teacher. Yet once Mrs. Joyce began working with Jane, she shared that "I felt like I could trust her because, in my opinion, if you're going to be a successful teacher coach, I've got to feel like I can trust you." Through sharing a teacher perspective, Jane establishes trust.

In addition, Jane is able to fully embody both the teacher and the coach roles because she is knowledgeable of the elementary content. Jane's specialty is reading, yet

she is also highly skilled in mathematics. District leaders require a bachelor's degree and successful teaching experience for those transitioning into coaching roles, and Jane has both of those requirements. For Jane to maintain a credible status with both her principal and her teachers, she has to know content standards and best instructional practices for implementing those content standards. While secondary teachers often have the opportunity to specialize in content areas, elementary school teachers are required to know all content areas well. Such breadth and depth of knowledge is a daunting expectation for teachers, so Jane works to support them in both curriculum and instruction. One way Jane does this is by constantly reading and studying on her own. Since the teaching role is heavy with pressure, Jane tries to alleviate some of that pressure by staying abreast of current research on best practices so that she can serve as a learning conduit for teachers.

Perimeters.

two vanishing points
obsolete depth perception
seeing in between

Figure 5. Depth perception.

Looking back on starting her job eight years ago, Jane said she "had no idea what it meant" to be a teacher coach. While Mr. King, as principal, received information about how to use the teacher coach in his school, Jane received no guidelines for how to enact her role. Therefore, the structure the district created supported a role that lives in the borderlands, between this and that. Jane's role as teacher coach positions her between Walnut Grove Elementary and Keys Elementary. She physically spends half a week here

and half a week there. Her time and placement shift from one school to the other school. Jane is neither administrator nor teacher. She even describes herself as a "middleman" (Figure 5). Clearly, she inhabits a niche in Mr. King's leadership world, but her allegiance most often points to teachers and students, not the administration. Additionally, in enacting her role as teacher coach, Jane is often in between, planning well yet also needing to assess contextual factors in order to solve problems on the spot. While Jane lives out a life in the borderlands between different worlds, her role has focus and purpose because of Mr. King's leadership at the school level.

In the borderlands, individuals often struggle to find their identity as they are torn between cultures, geographical places, and family (Anzaldua, 1987). Despite such separation, living in the borderlands can cause inhabitants to develop special skills and abilities specifically because they must navigate the in between. While at times Jane has struggled to fill a role that is in between, her stance is overwhelmingly optimistic and hopeful for coaches in the borderlands. The conflict of living between leadership roles also leaves Jane weighing the benefits and drawbacks of borderland life. For example, while Jane has strong relationships with the teachers with whom she works, those relationships are built on a professional foundation. They talk about personal matters, but the relationships are premised in the work that must be done. Because Jane is in between and her time is limited, she is able to let go of some of the personal relational requirements in which members of a community participate, like baby and wedding showers. Jane enjoys knowing teachers on a professional level, and she is grateful that their conversations are about student learning.

Another advantage of Jane's in between status is the ability to achieve a more objective perspective on issues and problems that arise. She said, "I feel like I can stand outside and offer something that, maybe when you're in the midst of this everyday that you don't see." Such a perspective serves as Jane's "la facultad" (Anzaldua, 1987) and gives her a skill that neither principals nor teachers could possess due to their more tightly bound roles. Jane's super skill of outsider perspective helps her as she brokers between stakeholders at the school level.

Mr. King attributes any success Walnut Grove achieves to the collective work of the teachers and staff, including Jane. He is sure the school could not grow in the way it has if Jane was not there filling the role of teacher coach. As an in between role, however, Mr. King points to the dangers of living between borders when he stated that instructional coaching "can be an extremely important role. The sad thing about it is that there's so many things that happen in this that people are never going to see." Through ignorance or ease, school board members, parents, and community members may be unaware of the invisible world of the teacher coach. As a leadership role that continues to live in obscurity, those who are uneducated about the work behind the scenes may question the role's purpose and function, thereby threatening its sustainability. The on going struggle for coaching sustainability may well be linked to the invisible work that coaches perform that often goes unseen by school boards and superintendents who make strategic financial decisions.

Jane views her work of teacher coach through the metaphor of a thermostat. As a coach, Jane works among so many people, so many places, so many roles, and so many responsibilities that finding balance between all of the in betweens is her goal. As a

temperature regulator, a thermostat helps an environment achieve balance so those living in the environment can perform daily activities at an optimal level. Goals can be accomplished when the temperature is very hot, but the heat can become a hurdle to efficiency and wellbeing. Likewise, goals can be accomplished in extremely cold environments, but that climate may also require bulky clothing, which may affect performance. A thermostat allows those living in challenging environments to perform well because a thermostat changes the environment to one that is balanced, controlled, and intentional. As a teacher coach, Jane helps those at Walnut Grove to achieve a climate that allows them all to move toward growth.

Ashley: "A Community of Learners"

In mid June, after all tests are completed and all students have left for the summer, the kindergarten and first grade teachers at Grace Crossroads Elementary School (pseudonym) are busily planning for the upcoming school year. The air is hot, humid, and still; the school feels isolated and alone with all of the students home for the summer. Custodians are busy cleaning, staff members are dressed casually, and it seems like the whole school is preparing for hiatus. However, behind the school, tucked away in a mobile unit, six kindergarten teachers, six first grade teachers, two district lead teachers, and one school-based lead teacher are all preparing for the 2014-2015 school year. The mobile unit has two rectangular tables positioned in opposite corners of the room. Teachers cluster tightly around these tables. Pizza boxes, cupcakes containers, and soda bottles line the tops of the bookshelves.

Ashley McBride, district lead teacher for math and science, sits with the kindergarten teachers. The kindergarten team spent the morning with the district lead

teacher for reading and social studies and has shifted to focus on math for the afternoon. Ashley blends in as a member of the team as she participates alongside the teachers. She does not drive the conversation nor does she observe the conversation. Just after eating, the team looks at the first unit in their pacing guide together, they access the Common Core math standards included in that unit, and then the discussion moves through the team. Together, they share how they taught the standards last year, how well those strategies worked, and what resources they used. As they discuss the unit, the kindergarten teachers and Ashley share ways to assess and differentiate between the students who are struggling and the students who have obtained the skills. Each teacher is taking her own notes, each using a different method. Ashley pauses during the first unit discussion to let them know that she will keep electronic notes of this discussion and will send this out to everyone. Having started at 12:30 p.m., the team continues talking through units until after 3:00 p.m. They are focused and tireless in their efforts to write down ideas in order to guide their work in the first quarter of the upcoming school year. By mid afternoon the principal has come in and walked between the two groups, taking note of the work that the teams have accomplished. As the teachers pack up, thunderstorms roar to life in the distance. Outside, changing pressure systems blacken the sky, the temperature has dropped nearly 20 degrees, and steam is rising from the pavement.

Place.

Ashley works as one of two district lead teachers, another name for an instructional coach, serving all 17 of the elementary schools in her district (Figure 6). Her expertise is in math and science, and she has a partner coach who works with all 17

schools in the areas of reading and social studies. Each elementary school within the county has a school-based lead teacher who serves as a support person and leader in the curriculum and instruction needs of the school. Ashley works with principals to plan professional development needs at the schools, with school-based lead teachers to provide content information and updates from the district and the state, and with classroom teachers throughout the district.

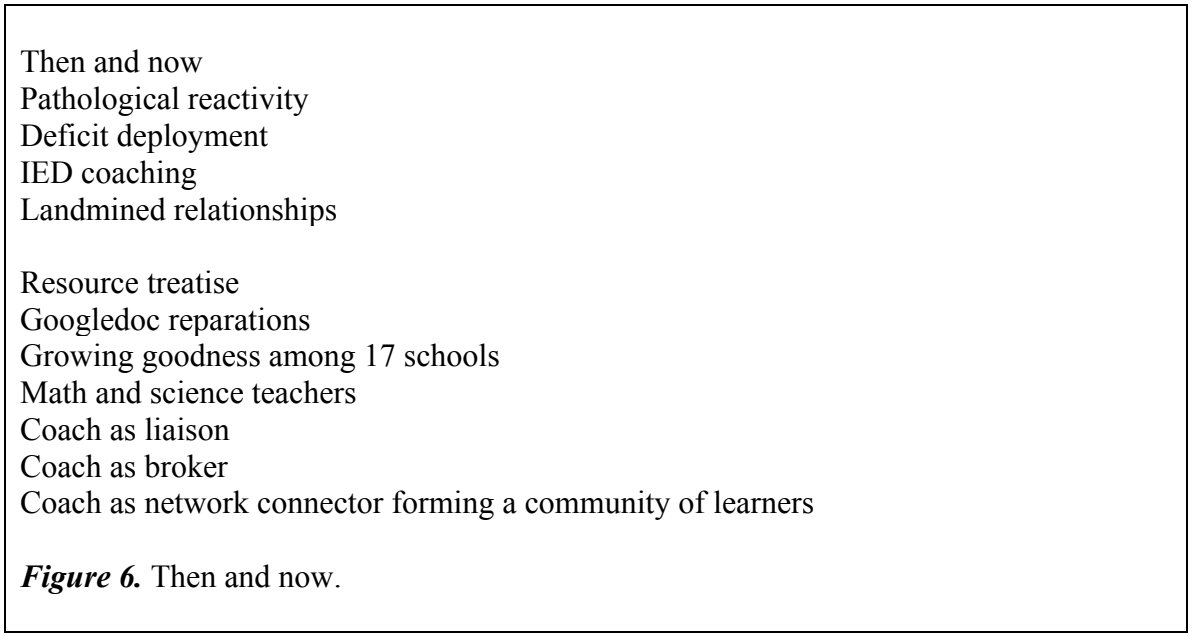

Figure 6. Then and now.

Ashley taught elementary school for eight years and has worked as a district lead teacher for nine years. She received her master's degree in math education and is pursuing her doctorate in math education. While Ashley's role includes both math and science education and support, she spends the majority of her time working with math. NC measures proficiency in math for third grade, fourth grade, and fifth grade and only measures proficiency in science for fifth grade; consequently, when principals determine the focus for their schools, they often create goals around math.

Similar to Jane, Ashley began her coaching position without a job description, yet she uses the structures the district now has in place to create a network of learners across the county. By accessing school-based lead teachers and supporting principals in strategic management of resources, Ashley is able to advocate for a plan to support teacher learning throughout the district.

Ashley's school district has employed district lead teachers for over 10 years. She became interested in the job because she had been working as part of a grant where she delivered math professional development across the state to other teachers. Ashley enjoyed the challenge of working with adult learners, and she learned through that experience about leading and learning with adults. Additionally, one of her close friends was one of the original lead teachers for the district. When her friend left her position as district lead teacher, she suggested that Ashley apply. While she did not apply right away, within several years she did apply to become one of the district lead teachers. With no job description, Ashley relied heavily on the other lead teacher for guidance in understanding her new role.

Ashley now recognizes both the challenges and the benefits associated with this lack of structure saying that without mentors, figuring out how to enact her job would have been a struggle. Yet she also said, "I learned from my reading partner and the other people in the department what my role was…it allowed me to really make it [the role] what I wanted it to be." When she was hired, Ashley was told that she should help schools with math and science. While that vague direction could have created tension for some, Ashley felt empowered to create a system of support for teachers in math and science.

Though the district did not have clear job descriptions to help coaches enact their roles, they did have an established structure for communication and support in place. In addition to the two elementary district lead teachers who focus on the core content areas, each school has a school-based lead teacher. The school-based lead teacher functions as a liaison between the district lead teachers, teachers, and principals. Until three years ago when the role became mandatory, the role of the school-based lead teacher was sporadic at best throughout the elementary schools in the district. Before creating school-based lead teaching positions, Ashley said that from her district-level perspective, communication felt haphazard and irregular, and she was never quite sure who received the content updates from the central office. The district lead teachers would meet with principals and teacher representatives, but often they would find that their content updates were not delivered or were delivered inaccurately. Ashley said that there were "holes" in the communication from the district level to the teachers throughout the district. Since the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, the district lead teachers have been meeting with school-based lead teachers and principals monthly, and Ashley added that with this system in place "I have found that consistency is so much stronger."

The school system created a structure that connects each school to the district, and district leaders also shifted how the district lead teachers were deployed within the county. In the past, Ashley and her literacy partner were sent to schools based on state accountability test results. They worked from a deficit model in order to attempt to close the achievement gaps at these priority schools. Beginning in the 2013-2014 school year, district leaders shifted to another model for deployment. The new model relies upon principals creating a plan for how to use the district lead teacher within the school,

articulating that plan to the district, and then working with the district lead teachers to arrange schedules in order to enact that plan. With the new model Ashley said she was "rarely called in to fix situations," which is in stark contrast to the old model. With the old model Ashley said she found that "they [principals] didn't have a plan," and she was often left to make one up on the spot. Of the 2013-2014 school year, she said, "we met with every one of them [the principals], and they had to have a plan in place. It was much better. We met with them and said, 'What are your concerns?'" By shifting the allocation of their time and resources to where principals have a plan, Ashley and the other district lead teacher now work with a wide range of teachers, yet the work is not viewed as punitive, and they do not feel like they are working from a deficit mindset. Where Ashley once spent the majority of her time in specific schools that had low accountability scores, she now divides her time working with schools that have low accountability scores and also schools that are not labeled as low performing. She has found that because she is working in schools where principals have a plan, the teachers are ready for coaching and welcome her into their classrooms and planning meetings.

Ashley identified the principals with whom she works as "absolutely critical to everything," and she feels those principals have a clear understanding of the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the district lead teachers and principals. The principals Ashley works with develop a plan of support and then seek Ashley's input in rolling out that plan. Inherently, the system values communication, collaboration, and dialogue among principals and those in support roles in order to enact the proposed plans. In addition to principals understanding how to best use those in supporting roles within their schools, Ashley also said that there are some critical principal characteristics that help her

to engage successfully in schools: presence and humility. Ashley said that one of the principals in her county does attend the profession development that she offers to teachers:

> She comes to my model lessons most of the time, she is definitely there in attendance, but if she's not there, she has a presence there that they know 'this is the expectation.' That leadership piece is absolutely critical.

Ashley indicated that principals need to see what she is doing with teachers so that they are aware of what to look for in the classrooms. She said that the principal role is a "delicate balance of push and support." While Ashley works with teachers to support their needs and the overall needs of the school, principals can best understand how Ashley's support might transfer to classroom practice by being present in her work with teachers.

In addition to being physically present, Ashley pointed to the need for principals to bring an attitude of humility in their leadership role. Ashley felt that it has been a challenge to work with principals who claim to know everything or exude an air of expertise, no matter the content. Rather, she said she saw more learning in places where principals accepted not knowing everything and commited to learning and listening from knowledgeable sources around them. Ashley said:

> I think valuing that there's expertise in your building and knowing who to listen to…listening to the people who bring this expertise and not having a macho [attitude], it doesn't matter if you're male or female, but having this superior attitude that I know everything. Really valuing what other experts bring to the table and listening to that.

Such humility among district lead teachers, teachers, and principals has built teams that bridge hierarchical boundaries within schools so that no one person has all of the knowledge and expertise. Rather, the entire school community bands together as a community of learners in order to engage in problem solving and learning together (Figure 7).

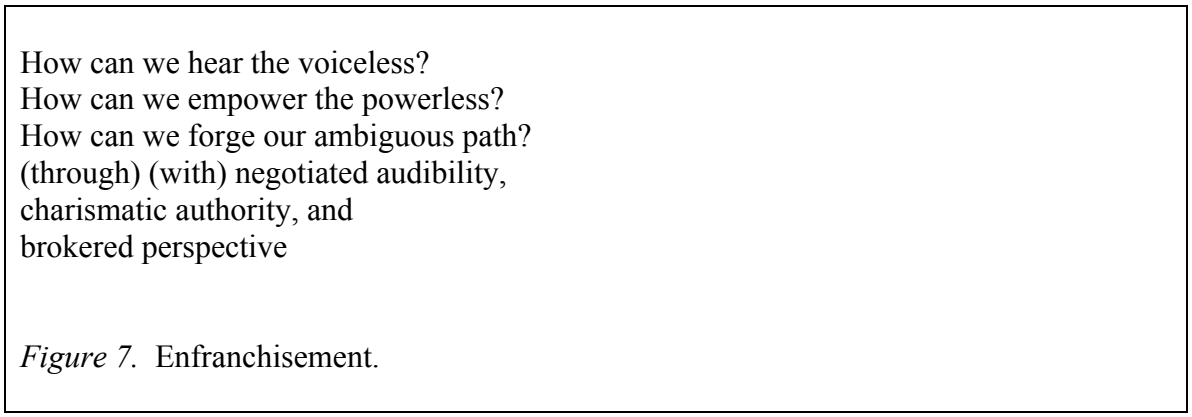

Figure 7. Enfranchisement.

Purpose.

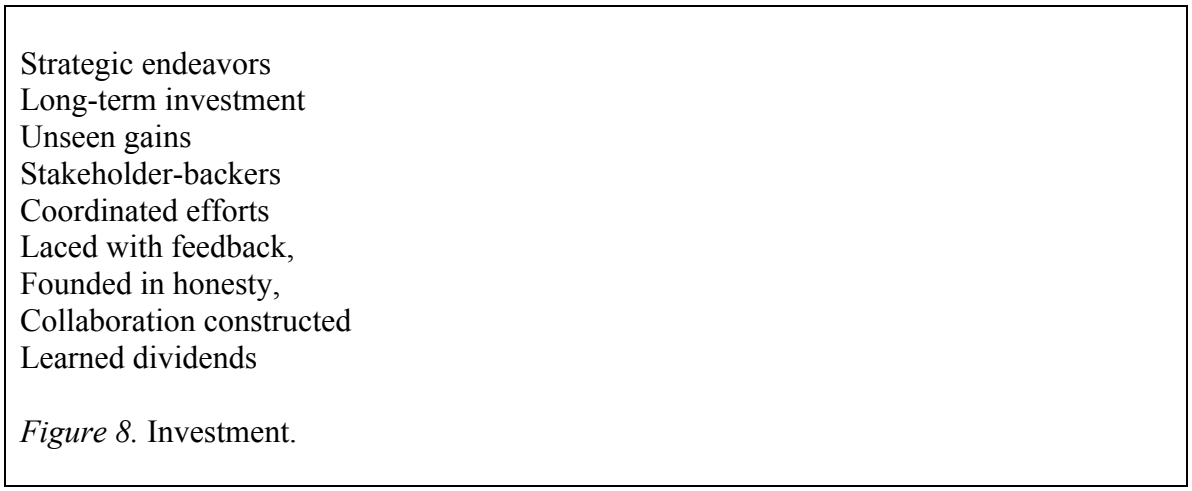

Figure 8. Investment.

As a district lead teacher, Ashley engages with principals to support their schools based on a plan that is mutually agreeable (Figure 8). In addition to supporting the needs that principals have identified for their schools, Ashley responds to specific teachers' needs within the district. Before the 2013-2014 school year, she often provided large-

scale professional development opportunities, but with waning resources and a different deployment plan, her time and energy have now been allocated to individual schools. In the summer, the two district lead teachers worked with administrators at the central office to create and share a live, interactive document where principals uploaded their plans for the professional development needs at their schools. The district lead teachers worked with the directors to create a folder in Google Drive where principals uploaded documents describing their plans for professional development. The plans included how the district lead teacher could support their professional development. Once all of the plans were in place, the district leads then communicated and negotiated plans with principals. In addition to supporting the principals' plans for schools, Ashley is also available to teachers in the district who email or call asking for support.

Ashley uses many different strategies to support the principals' plans and the teachers' needs. One strategy that she employs is brokering, which she views as sharing information in two directions: to schools and to the central office.

> I think part of the brokering is the information from here [central office]. The information, whether it be pacing guides, curriculum resources, county expectations for math, the model of math instruction. I'm brokering information back through here [central office] about the struggles the teachers are having, the successes they're having, how it's going in the field.

Having once been a teacher and now working at the central office in a role that is positioned between multiple spaces, Ashley is uniquely positioned to broker to all parties.

Besides brokering, Ashley supports teachers through offering feedback, planning lessons, assessing students, collecting data, and modeling strategies. Ashley feels that

offering feedback to teachers is one of the key strategies she uses that transfers to better instructional practices. As a new teacher, Ashley was given feedback both about her teaching and about the professional development she offered to others. In her own coaching practices, she gauges readiness in her teachers before offering feedback. One of the teachers Ashley works with mentioned that one of the key ways Ashley has helped her is through providing feedback. Likewise, one of the principals Ashley works with said that Ashley supports the growth of her teachers in her school by "modeling, observing frequently, supporting with feedback, and guiding planning [for classroom instruction]." The work Ashley does with teachers indicates that she has developed trusting relationships and has been focused on engaging with teachers in order to support their learning.

Preparation.

Ashley is able to enact her role as coach because she balances learning new concepts with knowing her areas of math and science well. Also, Ashley finds ways to connect to other teachers and principals within the system by building professional relationships that open opportunities for her to support teacher learning (Figure 9). Competence paired with interpersonal skills allow Ashley the opportunity support professional development among stakeholders in her district.

Ashley has a master's degree in math, is working on her doctorate in math education, and has worked as a coach specializing in math and science for more years than she taught. Ashley shared the challenge that elementary school teachers face as they have to master all content areas and usually do not have the advantage of specializing in just one or two areas. She sees the opportunity for her to specialize in math and science

as advantageous for her and the teachers in her district. Her specialty can enhance others' experiences and knowledge bases. Ashley also believes that advanced degrees are important for school district leaders. In her district, school-based lead teachers are not required to have a master's degree, but one of the hiring qualifications for district lead teachers is that they have a master's degree. Ashley said that a key quality for successful coaches is that they are always learning and willing to learn; pursuing her advanced degrees provides evidence that she is investing in herself as a continuous learner.

Year 1: "Hello, I'm the district lead teacher for science and math, and I'll be supporting your school this year. If you need anything let me know."

And I offered whole group professional development;
I visited your school;
I asked your name and made a joke;
I remembered your name when I saw you at the grocery and when all elementary school teachers in the county convened
and anytime I saw you I stopped to talk

Year 2: "Hello, I'm the district lead teacher for science and math, and I'll be supporting your school this year. If you need anything let me know."

And I offered small group professional development;
I saw you in the hall and remembered your name;
I came to your grade level meeting and answered some questions;
I pulled some resources that you wanted and emailed them to you;
I sent a card when your mom died

Year 3: "Hello, I'm the district lead teacher for science and math, and I'll be supporting your school this year. If you need anything let me know."

Today, you asked me to come visit your class and observe your fraction math lesson;
You asked me for feedback;
We brainstormed together.

Figure 9. Finally.

Talking about the value of education, Ashley said:

> I think it is a little bit of credibility. I think also I learned much in my master's that I didn't learn in my undergraduate, and it did, again, give me a different perspective…going back to school and seeing other modes of instruction and curriculum. And, I think you're being exposed to research, you're being exposed to up to date practices, you're being exposed to the university level. I think it does give you a different perspective of things you can take back and help teachers with, because for the most part, I thought my master's was very practical and helpful.

In addition to using educational opportunities to help her in her career and to help satisfy her own learning needs, Ashley pursues her own professional development. Early in her career she joined a National Science Foundation, multiyear, grant opportunity at Meredith College. Through this opportunity, Ashley attended math professional development over the summer and throughout the school year where she learned from leading mathematicians. Those who were accepted to participate in the grant helped to develop state curriculum and resources that aligned to the math content standards. During the third year of the grant, participants provided professional development to other teachers throughout the state. Ashley used that opportunity to learn and grow from other teachers and from the feedback other teachers shared with her. In her role as district lead teacher Ashley is both credible and competent. She is knowledgeable from her education and experiences, and she continues to grow to hone her coaching craft.

While Ashley's content knowledge serves her well, she also possesses key interpersonal skills that support her work in the district. Ashley listens well, is optimistic

and encouraging, and establishes trust with those with whom she works. Her relationships coupled with her leadership style mean that Ashley's competence, knowledge, and judgment are well received and sought after in her district. Ashley identifies building relationships with teachers, principals, and school-based lead teachers as her absolute top priority. In that process, Ashley said she is "not really directive," and she does not tell others that they have to change their practice. She said "it's about building relationships with teachers and easing them in." While Ashley understands best practice related to math instruction, she does not force feed these strategies. Rather, she invests in long-term relationships in order to reap the rewards from these investments in the future. In building relationships, Ashley identifies listening as a key skill saying, "Be a good listener…I think part of the coach's role is to listen and build from that." Listening allows Ashley to build relationships so that she can then analyze how the teachers are thinking, ask better questions, and affirm and challenge situations based on each scenario.

In addition to listening to others, Ashley is optimistic, encouraging, and hopeful in her work. She describes part of what she does as "cheerleader." Cheerleaders are enthusiastic, and they encourage others to join in the work. While Ashley's work is credible, tangible, and real, there is an emotional component to her work as well. She supports teachers who are tired, who are worn out, who are doing their best work and sometimes not getting the results they want; she works with teachers who are fatigued by the state climate of accountability and lack of appreciation for teachers. All of those aspects of her work mean that Ashley must not only be knowledgeable and competent as

a coach, but also she has to serve teachers emotionally in order to encourage them to keep going in this important work.

Ashley invests in relationships so that she can establish trust with her coworkers. She invests by listening and by supporting the work teachers are doing in non-directive ways. She encourages and provides hope. An effect of this investment is that she is able to establish trust with the teachers across the county. In speaking about trust, Ashley said that to build and sustain trusting relationships "you have to keep your mouth shut." As she moves throughout the district she hears and observes plenty. All of Ashley's work can be undermined if she does not protect the confidences of the teachers. Ashley is someone teachers trust with their strengths and weaknesses, and Ashley realizes the importance of maintaining this confidence as a strategy to avoid eroding the trust she has built with teachers.

Ashley was hired to help improve the math and science learning in her district. Through skilled listening and gentle encouragement, Ashley has built trusting relationships where others want her support in math and science. Her relational skills are not just accessories in her work. These relational skills are the staples in Ashley's wardrobe that fully allow her to enact coaching.

Perimeters.

When Ashley began her job, she had no perimeters and said she probably would have struggled with that concept were it not for her peers and friends who supported her in figuring out how to enact the district lead teacher role (Figure 10). Ashley's work pulled her into 17 elementary schools, between schools and the central office, and among established roles at the central office. Ashley said:

> I feel like I'm in the middle. I don't belong to this group of directors and superintendents. I don't belong to the school, the principals, or the teachers. I don't belong to the secretary. I am this in between, and I can't imagine if I didn't have my ELA [English Language Arts] partner. I would be miserable.

The district structure for Ashley's role as lead teacher has resulted in a job that lives in liminality (Turner, 1964) and exists between other well defined borders within educational leadership. Ashley's liminal life in the borderlands requires her to navigate with all stakeholders in the school: district lead teachers, school-based lead teachers, teachers, and principals. The district lead teacher for literacy accompanies Ashley in the borderlands (Anzaldua, 1987).

A teacher wakes panicking over the lesson not yet created, the papers not yet scored, and the student—that student—that she hasn't been able to reach, yet.

A teacher smiles because of a conversation with a student when that child realized an error in life thinking.

A teacher laughs delightedly over dinner remembering the child's writing that described reindeer reproduction as hatching from eggs.

A coach wakes wondering which school she has penciled in for today: how far am I driving, how much fuel do I have in my car, and did I make all of the copies before I left the office?

A coach smiles when a teacher blames her for the 34 students sitting in the overcrowded class.

A coach laughs remembering how all the kids from that one class now know her as "fudge lady."

Figure 10. The little things.

Turner (1964) said that liminal stages are characterized by looking a little like the other roles previously filled by the individual. Yet he (Turner, 1964) also said that liminal stages possess key characteristics that make them different from other stages in life. Liminal stages are both alike and different from roles and stages that are familiar to the individual. Thus, Ashley's work as district lead teacher is both alike and different from teacher and administrative roles. Consequently, she experiences both drawbacks and benefits, pushing and pulling her through the borderlands. As neither teacher nor administrator Ashley said that she often feels powerless and voiceless in her world as district lead teacher. She said, "they're making decisions that do impact me and they don't always ask my opinion." She also said that she saw herself as credible, reliable, and knowledgeable.

Within the next year Ashley will complete her doctorate, yet she continues to feel disenfranchised, particularly by her peers at the central office. She recognizes that she is not in a position of power, yet she is frustrated by not being consulted for key content decisions. Compared to others who reside in the borderlands, Ashley can relate to feelings of invisibleness where others are unable to see, hear, or relate to her liminal state.

In addition to not being heard in her role, being in between both borders and the better defined educational leadership roles creates situations for Ashley where she feels like she lacks direction and belonging. With no job description, Ashley must set about figuring out how to help the district with math and science. While this process would be daunting for a team, Ashley has navigated this particular course alone. She has a literacy peer with whom to find support and community, yet she has no one else in the entire district who truly performs her exact role. In figuring out her role, she has let experiences

teach her. Initially, she and her literacy partner supported schools with low state accountability test scores, yet they have arrived at a place where they work primarily with those who want to work with them as demonstrated by the principals' support plans.

The very same liminality that creates some drawbacks for Ashley also results in some benefits. While Ashley struggles with finding direction, she has the flexibility to find the direction that makes sense for her and for her district. She had the opportunity to develop a support plan that is reasonable based on the evidence she has gathered. As she said so well, "I can make the job what it needs to be." Additionally, Ashley's position as content specialist is desirable when compared to the life of many elementary school teachers who must know all content areas well enough to teach them to young children. Ashley loves math and gets to spend time thinking and dwelling in that place. Finally, for Ashley being in between means not having a specific place to belong, but it also means that she avoids much of the drama associated with school communities.

Perhaps the biggest benefit of working in the borderlands is that Ashley is honing and building the sense that Anzaldua (1987) described as "la facultad." Ashley nimbly moves between borders and works with those in all different layers of the school hierarchy, her perspective is distinct. Because she has taught and worked with teachers, she carries a teacher lens that enables her to build relationships with teachers. She also works with many administrators and supervisors, so she is able to analyze situations from a big picture perspective. Much of Ashley's work supporting principals and responding to their needs is accomplished through brokering. Yet in order to broker well, an individual must be believable, persuasive, and credible, and all of those traits are born through lived experiences and real perspective. While Ashley's role navigating the

borderlands comes with some costs, she possesses a benefit in developing a distinctive perspective.

Ashley compares her work supporting teachers to a bridge. Through brokering and building relationships Ashley is able to connect or bridge the principals' goals with classroom instruction; she is able to connect district-level ideas to school-level implementation. Bridges are modern technologies that often serve to connect populations of people who once lived life totally removed from other populations (Lamb & Morrissey, 2000). Yet with bridges in place, people begin to move, goods are transferred, and ideas begin to migrate. When the district lead teacher serves as a bridge, communities of learners can grow and thrive throughout the district.

Kate: "Implementation with Fidelity"

On a late summer day, just as the school year had gotten started, Kate Overton has an appointment to meet with three third grade teachers in the media center after school. She is prepared for the teachers before the bell rings: a folder marks each person's spot, a PowerPoint is projected on the screen, and she has additional resources on the center of the table. Kate hustles about with a frantic energy, pulling materials from her bags, double checking her PowerPoint, and buffering a video she plans to show. Finally, the bell rings and the cacophony of feet heading to parents or buses echoes through the school. It is 2:35 p.m., and the teachers are supposed to arrive for the meeting at 2:45. She has only an hour to give them all they need to know to get started with mCLASS (Amplify Education Inc., 2014), a tool adopted by the state as the primary method to assess students' growth in literacy. At 2:42 two teachers arrive, and by 2:50 the final teacher has made it to the media center. The teachers, all novices with less than one

week of teaching experience, sag in their chairs, have sodas in front of them, and look worn out. Kate begins hurriedly by introducing herself and her purpose saying,

> I'm Kate Overton; I work for the district as an instructional coach, and my role involves supporting elementary school teachers. I do a lot of literacy work for the county, and today I'm here to train you on mCLASS (Amplify Education Inc., 2014). Did each of you bring your laptops?

The teachers nod their heads and move to pulls their laptops out of their bags and open them.

Kate starts by showing a video of a teacher assessing her students with a handheld computer and then accessing the students' data in mCLASS (Amplify Education Inc., 2014) during her planning meeting. The information she sees in mCLASS (Amplify Education Inc., 2014) indicates the students' literacy strengths and weaknesses. The tutorial explains how to use the data to determine appropriate interventions to support students that have not mastered particular literacy skills, some of which are populated in mCLASS (Amplify Education Inc., 2014) based on the students' needs. The video lasts five minutes, and as it plays Kate watches the teachers to see how they are reacting to the video. With the video over, Kate takes her post at the PowerPoint and begins talking them through how to use mCLASS (Amplify Education Inc., 2014) to support students who are learning to read. After only a few minutes, Kate asks the teachers log in to their mCLASS (Amplify Education Inc., 2014) sites so that they can follow along on their computers with her. Occasionally, one of the teachers stops and asks for help navigating in the online program, and one of the other teachers leans over and points before Kate can make it over. Kate's navigational moves are fast paced and leave little room for

wandering around in the program. At 3:40, Kate stops, having gotten to the end of the PowerPoint, and asks for questions. The young women say nothing at first, and then one says, "I think I'll have to play with it myself to see if I have any questions." At that, Kate thanks them for their time, tells them she will be back in two weeks to check in, and reiterates that they should email her if they have any questions or need any help, even help assessing their students.

Place.

A day in numbers:

2	meals in my car
10,422	steps on my pedometer
4	schools on my calendar
1	notification of cancellation
6	observations of teachers
2	receptive conversations with teachers
156	more miles on the odometer
18	binders left in my trunk

Figure 11. A day in numbers.

After teaching for 15 years in many different states, Kate Overton has worked as a coach for five years in her district. She began that role without a job description and without parameters for how that role should be enacted; the direction and clarity for her work predominantly come from the superintendent, principals, and teachers themselves.

Kate's system has two elementary instructional coaches who serve all eight of the elementary schools in the county (Figure 11). Additionally, Kate has started working with the high school in the county to create a forum for sharing and discussing data points relevant to the high school including ACT scores, attendance records, discipline referrals,

and value added data. The coaches do not formally specialize and divide the content areas nor do they divide grade levels; both coaches respond to the needs throughout the county. While there are no formal specialties acknowledged through the job structure, Kate's literacy expertise and passion guide her work as a coach. One of the principals in the county described the structure of the role by saying, "they're not really set up where they have a specialty; they just do whatever needs to be done."

When she first began as a coach, Kate indicated that she had priority schools where she spent a certain amount of time each week, which were based on state accountability test results. However, with a new superintendent, the expectation is that Kate distributes her time equitably among all of the schools. The new superintendent, now in the second year of his tenure, refocused the district's priorities thereby affecting the work Kate does. Kate had worked for the previous superintendent for three years, and she explained that they worked on many goals in the district. The new superintendent spent one year as interim, has now accepted the role of superintendent, and has worked with the central administrative staff to choose fewer goals on which to focus. Kate said the superintendent's goal is to work towards fewer goals but to work on them with fidelity across the county. As a coach in a small, rural district, Kate delights in knowing all of her teachers and getting to be in all of the classrooms in the county, yet she also admits that such responsibility leaves her spread thin, and she sometimes feels inadequate to meet the diverse needs represented among teachers.

At the school level, Kate's work centers on teachers and how they are enacting the district's goals. Principals affect Kate's work, yet their relationship is secondary to Kate's relationship with teachers and the superintendent. There have been times when

principals have undermined Kate's work within schools by talking about her personally. Additionally, Kate feels that principals often do not work with teachers on a daily basis to visit classrooms and observe implementation of skills learned in training, which she also perceives as a lack of principal support.

Since Kate works to support and enact the superintendent's goals in the schools, her relationships with the principals fade into the background as she focuses on her work with the teachers. She welcomes help and support from the principals, yet she moves forward regardless because she has the support of the superintendent. While relationships with the principals are not a central focus for Kate's work, how principals structure their schools can either help or hinder Kate's work in concrete ways. One such example is time. Some principals have begun to realize that teachers need some time to work together in collaborative teams and have blocked out time during the school day for to make this happen. Consequently, when Kate needs to work with teachers at these schools, there are chunks of time already set aside for collaboration, professional development, learning, and thinking. Yet in schools without these time blocks, Kate struggles to get in and do her job with teachers. Kate said, "I can't be effective if I don't have the time to work with teachers." Additionally, once Kate leaves the school after a session of working with teachers, the best case scenario is that principals follow up Kate's work by looking for evidence of research based literacy strategies in classroom walkthroughs and observations. Yet across the district, the principals' understanding of district goals varies. Some of Kate's time is spent supporting principals' foundational understanding of research based literacy strategies (Figure 12).

Read To Achieve didn't have to tell me
that all children need to read

policy is my playbook
but my goal remains unchanged:

"Once you learn to read, you will be forever free" --Frederick Douglas

Figure 12. Read to achieve.

Purpose.

It's called a fidelity check by some
or a formative assessment by others
and I guess you could also say it's an opportunity to provide feedback

	Yes	No
Reading instruction		
1. Is logically sequenced		
2. Shows evidence of phonological skill development		
3. Shows evidence of decoding skill development		
4. Includes word structure instruction		
5. Includes fluency practice		
6. Includes instruction on vocabulary and comprehension		
7. Is integrated with written language instruction		
8. Is conducted in small groups		
9. Uses a variety of multi-sensory teaching strategies		

But what I really need to know is
should I carry my clipboard into the room to conduct
this fidelity check-formative assessment-feedback session?

Figure 13. Fidelity check.

As a district instructional coach, much of Kate's work stems from the directional focus the superintendent brings to the district and, therefore, to the instructional coaching role. Essentially, Kate works as the district's diplomat throughout schools focusing on strategies that support the district's goals. In addition to enacting the superintendent's

vision for the school system, Kate responds to the needs of teachers and works as a liaison between the various stakeholders (Figure 13).

The superintendent determines the work that Kate actually does in her eight elementary schools and in one high school. In the 2013-2014 school year her focus was to support teachers in teaching reading with research based strategies and to implement those strategies with consistently. As part of her work with literacy, Kate is certified as a trainer with Letterland (Wendon, Holt, & Carter, 2014), Reading Foundations (The North Carolina State Improvement Project, 2014), Words their Way (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2011), and mCLASS (Amplify Education Inc., 2014). Kate feels that her status as a trainer is evidence of her knowledge in reading strategies and supports the district's literacy goal. Her expertise combined with the superintendent's intention to focus on fewer goals but to do them well and with fidelity, translates into Kate being responsible for training every elementary school teacher in the county in how to use mCLASS (Amplify Education Inc., 2014).

Kate spends much of her time training teachers in small groups at their schools. While she ended the 2013-2014 school year with all the teachers trained, turnover and grade level changes result in a constant flow of training work. She shared that she anticipated all of August and September in the 2014-2015 school year to be spent training. Additionally, as data demonstrates areas for growth, Kate is tasked with targeting those areas with more training or with coaching that extends the knowledge learned in the foundational training. The coaching that Kate provides after the initial training typically stems from the needs she has observed or from requests by teachers. One of Kate's first strategies is usually modeling. One of the teachers with whom Kate

worked shared, “When we first started a new phonics program that Kate was very familiar with and believes in, she came and modeled a lesson for me. I felt like that gave me a great start in the phonics program.” Coaching also includes what Kate calls fidelity checks, which could be either announced or unannounced. Kate views fidelity checks as formative assessments of teachers using research based literacy strategies in their classrooms.

While she is tasked with enacting the superintendent’s vision, it is clear that Kate shares his vision for getting all students to read on grade level. It is also clear that they are united in their strategic focus on that goal. Kate said, “Whatever happens at one school happens at all schools. Whatever we do, we will do with fidelity, simplistic goals, and consistent implementation.” Her training of teachers also involves providing immediate feedback to them once a coaching session, regardless of the strategy, has taken place. After observing a teacher, Kate provides immediate feedback through a conversation with that teacher. As Kate shared with me, “It’s really about improvement and learning to get better as teachers.” One approach that Kate uses to enact an improvement mindset is through sharing this feedback with teachers.

In addition to using training as a strategy to implement the superintendent’s vision for the district, Kate responds to teacher and principal needs within the district. As one of the principals shared with me, if she has any need for herself or for her teachers professionally, she calls, texts, or emails the coaches, and they respond. Kate’s work as a coach is not a singular flow towards supporting teachers as she also supports the knowledge and implementation skills of the principals. Mrs. Westall (pseudonym), principal at Pine Grove Elementary School (pseudonym), has a background as a middle

school teacher and administrator and has served as an elementary school principal for three years. She shared that as she encounters content or pedagogy with which she is unfamiliar, she reaches out to the coaches to improve her own understanding.

Further, Kate supports any need that classroom teachers have through modeling, setting up their classrooms, assessing students, providing resources, and analyzing data. One elementary school teacher said that Kate came to observe her and then shared feedback about what she saw, helped set up literacy centers in her classroom, and had even helped screen her students. Kate's response to needs from teachers comes from any contact point: teachers reaching out to Kate, Kate observing a need on her rounds within the schools, or principals asking for Kate's support with a teacher in a particular area.

Kate's work as a leader and a veteran teacher means that she is well connected in professional educational networks. She uses those networks and connections to support the teachers in her district. As a liaison, Kate contacts others when she encounters a problem that she cannot solve alone. She reaches out to other leaders when she needs additional resources. Specifically, Kate maintains communication with professors at universities and with the directors at the NC Department of Public Instruction. These two access points allow her to gain up to date information and insight that can then benefit teachers.

While the superintendent primarily determines Kate's work, the emphasis chosen by the superintendent is not at random. Getting all students to read on grade level is the superintendent's focus for her system, and it is also a law in NC. Thus, Kate's work shifted to an intensive focus on using research based literacy strategies in all classrooms throughout the district during the 2013-2014 school year because of her superintendent's

goals and the Read to Achieve legislation. Kate fully supports this shift in her work and believes in the work as worthy and valuable. Both inspired and motivated to reach her goal, Kate said, "For the first time in my life, I feel like I can actually do it, I can actually get all students reading on grade level by the 3rd grade." Kate said that with her goal finally within reach, she plans to stay in the district until she reached that goal or "until they run me off."

Kate's words testify to the passion and belief that guide her work as she moves through schools and classrooms supporting the literacy strategies used by teachers in her district. For example, she devoted much of her the spring in 2014 to designing the Read to Achieve Camp for all students in the district who did not pass the state tests. The district leaders wanted their reading camp to be so good that all students, no matter if they passed or failed the test, wanted to attend. Many reading camps across the state looked like traditional summer school but not in the district where Kate is employed. Students went on field trips where they connected the words they were learning in the classroom to concrete, tangible things they could see, touch, and feel. They also had guest speakers.

While Kate was passionate about teaching children to read, she has become committed with even greater fervency to consistently and fidelity with the Read to Achieve legislation. Kate said early on in our conversations that "mCLASS is a huge piece of what I do." As the state focuses on data points that will determine passage or retention for all third graders, Kate too focuses on how to support teachers in assessing their students well so that both students and teachers are prepared for the end of the year assessment. Additionally, supporting teachers in their understanding of sound assessment

practices means that teachers can better intervene with their students early in the school year in order to provide the right support as they develop their reading skills.

Preparation.

What is important about a coach
is that she builds relationships with teachers
that she has connections with DPI representatives
that she is willing to take risks
that she is able to perform
but what is most important about a coach is that she is a specialist in a field with so many general practitioners

Figure 14. The most important thing.

While Kate uses many different strategies to accomplish her mission in her district, some of her primary assets are characteristics that are innate parts of her and the habits that she cultivates in order to continue to improve (Figure 14). Kate possesses a strong conviction in her work. She believes in what she does, and she believes that she is doing what is best for students. Kate also works to build relationships with teachers and principals, and she values learning and growing in her field of expertise, literacy.

Kate's passion, conviction, and belief that the work she does as a coach supports teachers so that students can learn emanates from her. She carries a force field around her that radiates positive energy about getting children to read. Much of what Kate does to support children learning to read comes from state policy and directives in the county, which could be unpalatable to coaches. Kate has taken those orders and enacted them because they are in place to help students learn. Kate's passion and belief in the work she does manifests itself in her positive energy. In her work, Kate faces pockets of resistance from people in the district who do not want to collaborate with her. Yet she remains

steadfast in approaching the goal of helping all children learn to read because she believes her goal will help children. Kate is able to disassociate herself from negativity and resistance with peace and optimism because the only thing that really matters to her is that students receive the best learning experience they can. The moral conviction of doing right on the behalf of the students in the district supports Kate when she faces teachers and principals who are not ready to collaborate.

Kate understands the value of relationships and trust within the realm of her coaching role. Trust is a critical aspect in her relationships with teachers because, as she put it, "I know their weaknesses." Because Kate's role is often enacted through fidelity checks, Kate treads carefully between judgment and support. She knows that how she is received is more about the relationship than the work. Kate invests in building professional relationships with teachers, getting to know them through training, classroom visits, and support sessions. She invests less in relationships with principals. She explained this choice saying that the work she does with teachers is just between her and the teacher. For teachers to trust her, she believes they must see their work and conversations as confidential. Therefore, she intentionally avoids interacting with principals when she is in a school to work with teachers. Kate is aware that teachers could perceive her conversations with principals as reporting on teacher performance, and since Kate already knows that there is resistance to her work, this is one strategy she employs to build relationships with her teachers. In building relationships with teachers, Kate said that she feels it is important that they see "a willingness to be vulnerable" from her. Kate said that she tries to model that it is acceptable to not have the right answer or be perfect with teachers.

Kate's refrain always involves relationships, yet Kate refuses to compromise students' opportunities to learn because of relationships with adults. When it comes to what is best for students, Kate does not back away from the right decision just to keep the adults happy. Once when Kate encouraged a teacher to shift from teaching students to read with worksheets to more flexible, leveled reading groups, the teacher was angry. Despite the teacher's anger, Kate refused to compromise on what is best for students' learning.

As a coach, Kate's expertise serves her well and opens doors of opportunity for her. She believes that instructional coaches should have areas of expertise, areas where they are richly and deeply invested. In her own area of literacy, Kate has a master's degree, has become a certified trainer for the various programs, methods, and companies used by her district, and continues to learn all she can about reading and teaching reading. Kate's goal is to stay abreast of what research indicates as best practice, and she wants to see research based strategies in teachers' classrooms. By learning and growing, Kate is better able to support teachers in how they teach children to read.

Perimeters.

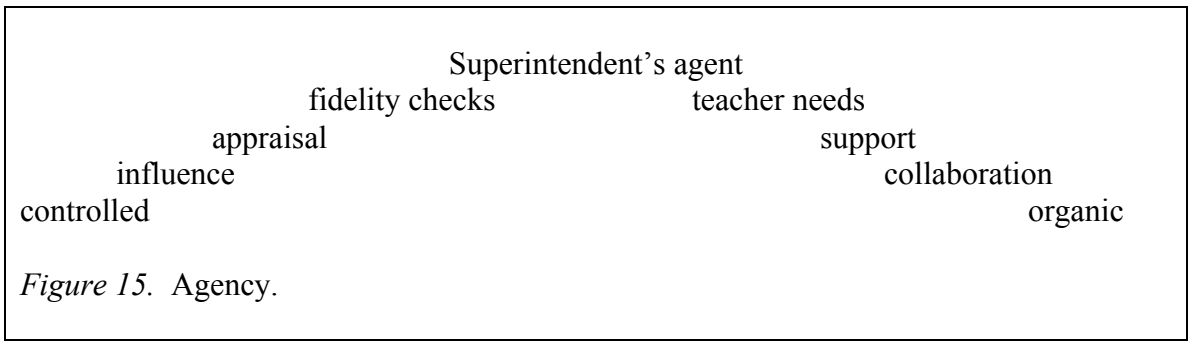

Figure 15. Agency.

Existing in liminality (Turner, 1964), in the space in between, is real for Kate (Figure 15). The job of instructional coach is positioned between the well-identified roles—teacher and administrator. Additionally, the job is positioned between well-identified locations—school and central office. However, it is the actual work that Kate does as coach that seems to entrench her in the in between. As coach she uses her relationships, energy, and knowledge to help teachers learn, yet she is also tasked with assessing teachers and using the information from those assessments to help teachers grow. Kate's work to use formative assessments, or fidelity checks, to help teachers improve may be useful if there is a culture of improvement that exists in the district or within the particular school where the teacher works. However, if no such climate exists, Kate's work of implementing fidelity checks may further establish her in a liminal space between worlds of support and evaluation.

Not only does Kate work within a liminal space in her role as a coach, but she also views some teachers as existing in between spaces. Kate said that many teachers have knowledge and expertise, yet they are trying to move to the next stage of improvement. She views her role as one of support for teachers in liminality while trying to hone their craft, and she is one of the supports that exists for teachers transitioning from one method of teaching to another method of teaching. Kate described an outdated method of using worksheets to teach reading as an example. Kate's job as liminal coach is to support teachers moving away from outdated methods to ways of teaching that are child centered, using diagnostic assessments and personalized interventions for students.

Kate used the metaphor of a conductor of a symphony to describe her role. She described this further saying that as a coach she takes all sorts of instruments—they

sound different, they look different, and they perform different musical functions—to make beautiful music. She needs some musicians to play softly, and she needs others to play loudly. As an instructional coach Kate supports the individual players in the district to create a literacy symphony.

Chapter 5: Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions

A poem for three voices is an appropriate form to capture the common aspects of the coaches' experiences as well as the disparities, valuing their individual voices and acknowledging their collective voice (Figure 16).

Anzaldua (1987) described la Coatlicue, a figure from the Aztecs, as a symbol of that represents opposites. The coaches' experiences in this study are stories of opposition—Jane had to know her content well, but she could not risk knowing so much that others did not want to be around her; Ashley got to make her role into what she felt it should be, but she often had no voice with those making content and pedagogy decisions in leadership positions above her; and Kate used fidelity checks as a formative assessment with teachers. Each coach's experience in some way resonates with De La Torre's (2007) view where borders separate "privilege from disenfranchisement…[and] power from marginalization" (p. 215). De La Torre's (2007) description of the American Mexican border depicts a land of stark contrasts, depending on which side of the border a person resides. Yet, in the borderlands (Anzaldua, 1987) that contrast is less clear. In the borderlands, occupants' experiences are not only this or that but are both (Turner, 1964). The coaches in this study have experienced the opposition of having no voice and also having a distinct perspective that others seek. They have experienced having a voice with teachers and having no voice with those in positional power at the district level. The

Jane	Ashley	Kate
I play the role of teacher coach	I play the role of district lead teacher	I play the role of instructional coach
I serve 2 elementary schools	I serve 17 elementary schools	I serve 8 elementary schools 1 high school
I support teacher professional development in all content areas	I support teacher professional development in math and science	I support teacher professional development in all content areas but especially literacy
I start with readiness	I start with readiness	I start with everyone but especially new teachers
Relationships with teachers principals students ground my work	Relationships with teachers principals students ground my work	Relationships with teachers principals students superintendent ground my work
Resources guide my work	 Feedback guide my work	 Fidelity checks guide my work
I live liminality in the borderlands regulating temperature	I live liminality in the borderlands building a bridge	I live liminality in the borderlands working as diplomat

Figure 16. Poem in three voices.

liminal borderland experiences of these coaches illustrate their in between status in educational leadership.

Living through coaching oppositions creates individuals who have la facultad (Anzaldua, 1987)—educational leaders who can reason as both teachers and administrators. Those filling coaching roles inherit a teacher perspective that frames their concerns around students, teaching, and learning in a classroom; and those filling coaching roles inherit a broader perspective, similar to administrators, who consider students, teaching, and learning throughout a school or throughout a district. Often coaches are former teachers, yet through working between administration and teaching gain the ability to see "deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface" (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 60) of educational organizational structure and culture. For the coaches in this study, their gained perspective, or la facultad (Anzaldua, 1987), allowed them to cross into both teaching and administrative realms. Informed perspectives empowered each coach to make decisions and solve problems uniquely and, in spite of their in between status, resulted in versatile and resilient educational leaders.

In Chapter 2, I reviewed instructional coaching and literacy coaching research and identified the emergent themes from the body of literature. To illustrate how my findings support this research literature, I created a chart to demonstrate these connections (Table 1). The first column in the chart includes themes from research literature, and the second column includes findings from my research related to themes from the body of literature.

The context in which coaching occurred influenced how coaching was enacted for the individuals in this study. Particularly, the coach's physical space within a school, the length of time a coach had worked with a school, and how a coach's work was

Table 1

Coaching Theme Comparison Between the Literature and the Current Study

Literature	Current Study
Coaching…	All three coaches…
is a form of professional development.	met the criteria for professional development identified in the literature.
is loosely defined, broadly defined, or not defined at all.	began work without articulated role descriptions.
is varied and context dependent.	reported that their work was dependent upon context, school or district leadership, and physical space within the school.
is built on trust, dialogue, and collaboration.	identified relationships as the primary focus of their work. defined trust and being able to communicate as central in building relationships with teachers.
is dependent on support from the principal.	identified support from the principal as important or critical to success. One coach also identified support from the superintendent as important to success.
involves diplomacy with stakeholders at the school and district levels.	worked as brokers between teachers and administrators.
outcomes vary.	shared their different measures for success and included teachers continuing to teach, improving state test scores, observations of teacher growth in content and pedagogy, and kids learning to read.

configured among schools within the district affected how the coach was able to fill the coaching role. Jane served only two schools in her district. She felt deeply embedded in one of those schools, yet she still felt like an outsider at the other school. At Walnut Grove Elementary, where she felt successful, Jane's work space was located in the hub of the school. She was adjacent to the office, staff restrooms, and media center. At Keys Elementary, Jane's work space was located in a mobile unit and was physically separated from the teachers. Another key difference between Jane's work at Walnut Grove and at

Keys was that Jane had worked at Walnut Grove for eight years but had worked at Keys for only two years. Jane had developed a working relationship with the principal, teachers, and school community during her time at Walnut Grove; at Keys she was still working to build relationships with all of the stakeholders. Additionally, how Jane, Ashley, and Kate implemented their work as a coach was dependent upon role configuration within the district. Jane's work was divided between two schools, Walnut Grove and Keys, and she felt particularly effective at Walnut Grove where the principal gave her purpose and direction as a coach. Ashley relied upon the principals to provide her with information regarding their school needs and goals in order to plan support for teachers. Kate's direction came from how the superintendent used coaching as a resource in the district to accomplish district-wide goals.

All three of the coaches felt that the relationships they built with stakeholders allowed them to do the work of coaching with success, yet each coach prioritized and developed those relationships differently. Jane and Ashley valued the relationships with teachers and principals above all other relationships. They felt that they needed the support of the principals in order to move forward in their work, and they each approached teachers based on teachers' readiness for support. In contrast, while Kate valued her relationships with teachers above all others and believed that help from principals made her work easier, she felt that she could move forward with her work in the schools because the superintendent supported her. Kate did not wait for readiness with teachers because she felt the urgency of students learning to read was too important. Kate moved forward with her work while simultaneously building relationships with teachers.

Implications for Instructional Coaching Roles

Findings from my research suggest that the role of instructional coach requires both flexibility and focus. The role requires flexibility as protection from a restrictive and narrowed approach to implementation. The coaching role necessitates flexibility that allows coaches the opportunity to adapt coaching strategies and enactment to contextual features. Yet the role also requires focus so that the coaching role has meaning and purpose. The balance of focus and flexibility can insulate the coaching role from too much guidance and too little direction. One concrete way to bring both focus and flexibility to the role is for districts to provide an articulated purpose for those filling the coaching role. Additionally, districts could determine which areas of the coaching role are flexible and which areas require well defined boundaries. Such a description could affect coaching evaluation measures, recruitment practices, and professional development opportunities. Moreover, because individuals filling the coaching experience ambiguity by virtue of their in between status, findings suggest that there are implications regarding hiring and recruitment for those most well equipped to work in a loosely defined role.

All three of the coaches that I worked with shared that they did not have a job description or clearly articulated job responsibilities when they accepted their role as coach. They described various strategies that they employed to deconstruct coaching role enactment. Jane and Ashley relied on peer mentors to help them, and all three allowed experience to teach them. While the role of instructional coach certainly seems to lean towards flexibility, a job description or definition that includes flexibility would help clarify the purpose and role of the coach for the schools and districts served. Clarifying the coaching role by describing it, including necessary flexibility, would empower

stakeholders to understand the purpose of the coaching role, to evaluate the fulfillment of the purpose, to celebrate when the purpose has been fulfilled, and to strategize when the purpose has not been fulfilled. While the coaches that I worked with have managed to find their purpose despite having no described role, an articulated description could decrease the amount of time it takes for a coach to acclimate to the borderlands by providing immediate direction.

Districts can support coaching by developing an assessment or evaluation tool that is aligned to the articulated purpose. Once the coaching role is defined and described, coaches could then assess themselves and could be assessed by others in order to check for alignment between performance, understanding, and thinking as related to the articulated purpose. In NC, both teachers and administrators are evaluated using the McREL Instrument (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2012). This teacher instrument describes six goals (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2012) with further articulation under each goal. The principal instrument has eight goals (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2012). Teachers and principals are then evaluated based on how well they fulfill those goals. Coaches currently have no evaluation measure. While the IRA (2006) adopted standards for secondary literacy coaches, none of the coaches that I interviewed were evaluated by any measure. Clarifying the purpose of the coach would create a structure that would support both reflection and evaluation.

Districts can support coaching by creating a professional development plan to support on going professional opportunities for those filling the coaching roles. The professional development opportunities for coaches should be focused on the description and the skills needed to fulfill the articulated purpose of the coaching role. Currently, the

coaches that I interviewed all view on going learning as a necessary characteristic of a successful coach, yet none of them are evaluated and rarely receive any feedback on their work. The professional development opportunities available to coaches are not usually connected to an overall performance goal that they are working towards. Researchers (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009) have indicated that often the professional development a coach receives can create tension in role enactment, as that professional development may be misaligned with the work that the coach actually does. Such misaligned professional development may be perceived as supportive and helpful but may actually undermine the coach's understanding of his or her work. With a clearly articulated purpose, professional development opportunities can be designed to meet the needs of those filling the coaching role and can also be aligned to their purpose.

Because the coaching role, even configured with flexibility and focus, requires the individual filling the position to make contextualized decisions, recruitment and hiring practices should include measures to assess candidates' readiness and ability to work in the in between. While each of the participants in this study adapted to filling a role in the borderlands (Anzaldua, 1987) individuals who work best with boundaries and guidelines to frame goals, outcomes, and strategies for implementation may not be well suited for the coaching role. Since the coaching role requires flexibility, those filling coaching roles must be nimble in their ability to adapt to different contexts throughout various school settings.

Implications for School and District Leadership Roles

District leaders and school-based leaders must have a clear understanding about how to best use instructional coaches to support teacher professional development.

Districts can support coaching by educating all district and site-based leaders on the purpose of coaching. District and school-based leaders must also develop collegial relationships with coaches in order to create open dialogue and communication regarding the work of supporting teacher professional development. All coaches indicated that the leadership, either school-based or district-level, was the most important factor in coach success. Both Jane and Ashley worked within models that encouraged dialogue with principals and required the principals to have a plan for how the coach could help to support the school's mission and vision. Kate depended upon the superintendent for her direction and support. It was essential in each of the districts that the principal or superintendent provided contextualized focus to those serving in coaching roles. For coaching to be flexible enough to respond to contextualized needs yet also to have focus, school and district leaders must understand curriculum, instruction, and interpersonal relationships in order to deploy coaches effectively. My research indicates that principals must understand their own roles and how to incorporate coaches into their plans for improvement within their schools.

Recommendations

Findings from my research suggest that there are two key contextual factors that are important in creating good coaching scenarios. First, it is important that coaches understand their role a position intended to support and enact the goals set forth by the principal or superintendent. Second, it is necessary that there is alignment between how coaches, principals, and teachers understand their collaborative work. Based on my experiences with this project and what I have learned from my participants, I have

compiled an igniter list of recommendations related to research and practice for instructional coaching:

- School districts should engage various stakeholders—coaches, teachers, principals, and central office administrators—in conversations to co-create common coaching expectations for the district.
- School districts should provide instructional coaches with an articulated purpose and primary strategies for achieving that purpose. The articulated purpose should include both the flexible and focused nature of this role. Districts should also develop an assessment or evaluation model that is aligned to the coaching purpose.
- School districts should provide an orientation for coaches that supports them by recognizing and understanding their in between status, in identifying the characteristics most helpful for inhabitants in the borderlands, and in identifying resources that are available for those occupying in between leadership roles.
- School districts should educate all principals and site-based leaders on the purpose of instructional coaches and primary strategies available to coaches. School districts should engage coaches and principals in formal introductions should encourage continual and transparent communication between coaches and site-based leaders.
- Future research should include collecting interview, observation, and document review data from school-based coaches who do not travel between schools to see how the coaching role is understood and enacted. While the scope of this study

included coaches who travel among schools, the body of research would benefit from data supporting how school-based coaches perceive and enact their role.

- Future research on coaching should include using portraiture or case study methodology to investigate best practices among principals in order to better understand how they support the work of coaches and which contextual factors support coaching enactment. Findings from this research indicate that the principal's role influences the coach's role and how he or she is able to enact this role. The body of coaching research would benefit from more in depth research related to particular principal behaviors that support coaching. Additionally, this research found that context affected how the coaching role was enacted. More research around which contextual factors help create environments ripe for coaching can support the development of this position as a sustainable educational leadership role.

Conclusions

The seed of this study was planted years ago when I first became a coach and was immersed in my own liminal experience traversing the coaching borderlands. Though I had no knowledge of this study, these participants, or this dissertation at that time, I knew that coaching left me feeling in between and pulled between worlds. Coaching left me wondering where I fit among the leaders in my school district. When I connected Turner's (1964) liminality and Anzaldua's (1987) borderlands to coaching, I felt that I had found the constructs that I needed to help me better understand and interpret the instructional coaching experience. I joined those theoretical perspectives to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) portraiture methodology with the aim of portraying the

richness of the three coaches' experiences so that the educational community could better understand what coaching is like. I used interviews, observations, document review, journaling, and aesthetic writing to complete the portraits, and I also employed the portraiture technique of co-construction, where I shared my notes with participants and invited feedback on those notes. From those data sources, I initially used an open coding method to create substantive categories and then theoretical categories (Maxwell, 2005). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) described this process as one of looking for converging themes or anomalies that lie outside of what is normally expected. I used those sources to create descriptive portraits and poems to illustrate the coaches' experiences.

For coaches to successfully enact this role they need relationships with both teachers and administrators, yet they cannot afford, relationally, to ally themselves too strongly in one direction or the other. Coaches need to be credible and competent which often comes from having a lived experience. Coaching requires problem solving, and we tend to do a better, more thorough job solving problems if we can access more perspectives to inform our process. Coaches have multiple perspectives by virtue of their position in between, and they continue to gain perspective the longer they serve as a coach. To make sense of the oppositions faced through inhabiting the in-between, those filling coaching roles need both focus and flexibility to enact their roles. Providing both focus and flexibility acknowledges the dualistic oppositions that exist in this role.

References

Amplify Education, Inc. (2014). *mCLASS: Reading 3D* [Reading assessment software]. Retrieved from http://www.amplify.com/assessment/mclass-reading-3d

Anzaldua, G. (1987). *Borderlands.* San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.

Awbry, S. M., Dana, D., Miller, V. W., Robinson, P., Ryan, M., & Scott, D. (2006). *Integrative learning and action: A call to wholeness.* New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Bean, R. M. (2009). Effective literacy coaching: A journey, not a destination. *CEDER Yearbook*, 133-144.

Bear, D.R., Invernizzi, M. A., Templeton, S., & Johnston, F. (2011). *Words their way*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Bearwald, R. R. (2011). It's about the questions. *Educational Leadership, 69*(2), 74-77.

Berliner, D. C. (2002). Educational research: The hardest science of all. *Educational Researcher, 31*(8), 18-20.

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2008). *Reframing Organizations* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Brady, C. H. (2007). Coaches' voices bring 6 lessons to light. *Journal of Staff Development , 28* (1), 46-49.

Chapman, T. K. (2007). Interrogating classroom relationships and events: Using portraiture and critical race theory in education research. *Educational Researcher, 36*(3), 156-162.

Coburn, C. E., & Woulfin, S. L. (2012). Reading coaches and the relationship between policy and practice. *Reading Research Quarterly, 47*(1), 5-30.

Cornett, J., & Knight, J. (2007). Research on coaching. In J. Knight (Ed.), *Instructional coaching: A partnership approach to improving instruction* (pp. 192-216). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Research design* (3rd ed*).* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

De La Torre, M. (2007). Living on the borders. *The Ecumenical Review, 59*(2-3), 214-220.

Denton, C. A., & Hasbrouck, J. (2009). A description of instructional coaching and its relationship to consultation. *Journal of Educational and Pyschological Consultation, 19*, 150-175.

DeRue, D. S., & Ashford, S. J. (2010). Who will lead and who will follow? A social process of leadership identity construction in organizations. *Academy of Management Review, 35*, 627-647.

Desimone, L. M. (2011). A primer on effective professional development. *Phi Delta Kappan, 92*(6), 68-71.

Deussen, T., Coskie, T., Robinson, L., & Autio, E. (2007). *"Coach" can mean many things: Five categories of literacy coaches in Reading First.* Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences.

Deutsch, M., & Krauss, R. (1965). *Theories in social physchology.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Dillard, C. B. (2006). When the music changes so should the dance: Cultural and spiritual considerations of paradigm proliferation. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 19*, 59-76.

Dillon, S. (2011, March 30). As sweeping layoffs loom, schools gird for turmoil. *New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/31/education/31layoffs.html?_r=0

Dixson, A., Chapman, T. K., & Hill, D. A. (2005). Research as an aesthetic process: Extending the portraiture methodology. *Qualitative Inquiry, 11*(16), 16-26.

Erickson, F. (1984). What makes school ethnography "Ethnographic?" *Council on Anthropology and Education Newsletter*, *4*(2*)*, 10-19.

Excellent Public Schools Act of 2013, N. C. S. B. 361, (2013).

Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership and sustainability.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Fullan, M., & Knight, J. (2011). Coaches as system leaders. *Educational Leadership*, 69 (2), 50-53.

Gallucci, C., DeVoogt, M. V., Yoon, I. H., & Boatright, B. (2009). Instructional coaching: Building theory about the role and organizational support for professional learning. *American Educational Research Association*, 47, 919-966.

Gibson, S. A. (2011). Coaching conversations: Enacting instructional scaffolding. *Mid-Western Educational Researcher, 24*(1), 5-20.

Giddings, L. S. (2006). Mixed methods research: Positivism dressed in drag? *Journal of Research in Nursing, 11*, 195-203.

Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers.* Boston, MA: Pearson.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). Paradigmatic controversites, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualititative research* (p. 1143). Sage Publications, Inc.

Guidance for the Reading First program. (2002). Retrieved from United States Department of Education: https://www2.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/guidance.pdf

Guskey, T. R. (2009). Closing the knowledge gap on effective professional development. *Educational Horizons, 87*(4), 224-233.

Guskey, T. R., & Yoon, K. S. (2009). What works in professional development. *Phi Delta Kappan, 90*, 495-500.

Haan, E. D., & Duckworth, A. (2012). Signalling a new trend in executive coaching outcome research. *International Coaching Psychology, 8*, 6-19.

Hackmann, D. G. (2002). Using portraiture in educational leadership research. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 5*, 51-60.

Hattie, J. (2002, August). Why is it so difficult to enhance self-concept in the classroom: The power of feedback in the self-concept-achievement relationship. Paper presented at International SELF Conference, Sydnay, AU.

Heineke, S. F. (2013). Coaching discourse: Supporting teachers' professional learning. *The Elementary School Journal, 113*, 409-433.

Herman, R., Boruch, R., Powell, R., Fleischman, S., & Maynard, R. (2006). Overcoming the challenges: A response to Alan H. Schoenfeld's "what doesn't work." *Educational Researcher , 35* (2), 22-23.

Hindman, A. H., & Wasik, B. A. (2012). Unpacking an effective language and literacy coaching intervention in head start. *The Elementary School Journal, 113*, 131-154.

International Reading Association. (2004). *The role and qualifications of the reading coach in the United States.* Retrieved from http://www.reading.org/general/AboutIRA/PositionStatements/ReadingCoachPosition.aspx

International Reading Association. (2006). *Standards for middle and high school literacy coaches.* Retrieved from http://www.reading.org/general/CurrentResearch/Standards/CoachingStandards.aspx

Jenkins, S., & Agamba, J. J. (2013). The missing link in the CCSS initiative: Professional development for implementation. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal, 17*(2), 69-79.

Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (1982). The coaching of teaching. *Educational Leadership*, 40 (1), 4-9.

Kessler, G. (2014, Sept 16). The swarm of attack ads claiming $500 in North Carolina education cuts. *The Washington Post*.

Knight, J. (2007). *Instructional coaching: A partnership approach to improving instruction* . Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Knight, J. (2011). What good coaches do. *Educational Leadership, 69*(2), 18-22.

Lamb, R., & Morrissey, M. (2000). How bridges work. *How Stuff Works*. Retrieved from http://science.howstuffworks.com/engineering/civil/bridge3.htm

La Shure, C. (2005). *Turner and Liminality (*Blog post). Retrieved from http://www.liminality.org

Lather, P. (1993). Fertile obsession: Validity after poststructuralism. *The Sociological Quarterly, 34*, 673-693.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (1983). *The good high school: Portraits of character and culture.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Lawerence-Lightfoot, S., & Davis, J. (1997). *The art and science of portraiture.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Marsh, J. A., McCombs, J. S., & Martorell, F. (2010). How instructional coaches support data-driven decision making. *Educational Policy, 24*, 872-907.

Matsumura, L. C., Garnier, H. E., Carrenti, R., Junker, B., & Bickel, D. D. (2010). Investigating the effectiveness of a comprehensive literacy coaching program in schools with high teacher mobility. *The Elementary School Journal, 111*, 35-62.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Mayer, A. P., Grenier, R. S., Warhol, L., & Donaldson, M. (2013). Making a change: The role of external coaches in school-based communities of practice. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 24*, 337-363.

Mehta, J., B., Schwartz, R. B., & Hess, F. M. (Eds.). (2012). *The Futures of School Reform.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Neumerski, C. M. (2012). Rethinking instructional leadership, a review: What do we know about principal, teacher, and coach instructional leadership, and where should we go from here? *Education Administration Quarterly, 49*, 310-347.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 20 Stat. 6301 (2002).

No child left behind. (2004, August 4). *Education Week*. Retrieved from http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/no-child-left-behind/

Peters, T. (2010). *The secret life of science coaches.* South Carolina Coalition for Mathematics & Science.

Poglinco, S. M., & Bach, A. J. (2004). The heart of the matter: Coaching as a vehicle for professional development. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *85* (5), 398-400.

Price, M. (2013, October). *Instructional coaching.* Paper presented at the Piedmont Triad Education Consortium, Greensboro, NC.

Public Schools of North Carolina, State Board of Education, Department of Public Instruction. (2012). *Evaluation instruments and processes*. Retrieved from http://www.ncpublicschools.org/effectiveness-model/ncees/instruments/

Rush, L. (2013). Literacy coaching in Wyoming secondary schools: A situational analysis of roles in context. *Journal of Literacy Research, 45*, 267-294.

Showers, B., & Joyce, B. (1996). The evolution of peer coaching. *Educational Leadership, 53*(6), 12-16.

Silicon Valley Mathematics Initiative. (2007). *Pedagogical content coaching.* Retrieved from http://www.noycefdn.org/documents/math/pedagogicalcontentcoaching.pdf

Smith, A. T. (2007). The middle school literacy coach: Considering roles in context. In D. W. Rowe et al. (Eds.), *56th Yearbook of the National Reading Conference* (pp. 53-67). Oak Creek, WI: National Reading Conference, Inc.

Steneck, N. (2014, August 4). *ORI introduction to the responsible conduct of research.* Retrieved from The Office of Research Integrity: http://ori.hhs.gov/ori-introduction-responsible-conduct-research

Stokes County Schools. (2014, June 15). *Vacancies.* Retrieved from http://www.stokes.k12.nc.us/hrvac.html

Strike, K. A. (2006). The ethics of educational research. In J. A. Green, G. Camilli, & P. B. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complimentary methods in educational research* (pp. 57-73). Washington DC: American Educational Research Association.

The North Carolina State Improvement Project (2014). *Research to practice: Reading foundations training.* Retrieved from http://www.ncsip.org/reading/index.php

Thomson Reuters. (2014). *Web of science*. [Search engine]. Retrieved from http://apps.webofknowledge.com/UA_GeneralSearch_input.do?product=UA&search_mode=GeneralSEarch&SID=3ENqByJ1wrzH914dr2a&preferencesSaved=

Tidd, S. T., McIntyre, H. H., & Friedman, R. A. (2004). The importance of role ambiguity and trust in conflict perception: Unpacking the task conflict to relationship conflict linkage. *The International Journal of Conflict Management, 15*, 364-380.

Tung, R., Ouimette, M., & Feldman, J. (2004). *The challenge of coaching: providing cohesion among multiple reform agendas.* San Diego, CA: Center for Collaborative Education.

Turner, V. (1964). Betwixt and between: The liminal period in rites of passage. In L. C. Mahdi, S. Foster, & M. Little (Eds.), *Betwixt and between: Patterns of masculine and feminine initiation* (pp. 3-19). Peru, IL: Open Court Publishing.

Turner, V. (1969). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure.* Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing.

U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2014). *Occupational outlook handbook*. Retrieved from http://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/instructional-coordinators.htm#tab-2

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. (2014). *What works clearinghouse* [Search engine]. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc

Van Gennep, A. (1960). *The rites of passage.* London: Routledge.

Walpole, S., & Blamey, K. (2008). Elementary literacy coaches: The reality of dual roles. *The Reading Teacher, 62*, 222-231.

Walpole, S., & McKenna, M. C. (2009). Everything you've always wanted to know about literacy coaching but were afraid to ask: A review of policy and research. In K. M. Leader, D. W. Rowe, D. K. Dickinson, M. K. Hundley, R. T. Jimenez, & V. J. Risko (Eds.), *58th yearbook of the national reading conference* (pp. 23-33). Oak Creek, WI: National Reading Conference, Inc.

Walpole, S., McKenna, M. C., & Morrill, J. K. (2011). Building and rebuilding a statewide support system for literacy coaches. *Reading & Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties, 27*, 261-280.

Walpole, S., McKenna, M. C., Uribe-Zarain, X., & Lamitina, D. (2010). The relationships between coaching and instruction in the primary grades. *The Elementary School Journal, 111*, 115-140.

Wendon, L., Holt, L., & Carter, S. (2014). *Letterland: Child-friendly phonics* [Teacher training and reading support]. Retrieved from http://www.letterland.com/

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools. (2012, February 15). *Winston-Salem/Forsyth County schools job opportunities.* Retrieved from http://www.wsfcs.k12.nc.us/Page/402

Wolcott, H. F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Yoon, K. S., Duncan, T., Lee, S. W.-Y., Scarloss, B., & Shapley, K. L. (2007). *Reviewing the evidence on how teacher professional development affects student achievement* . Institute of Education Sciences. Washington DC. US Department of Education.

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Exemption

Notice of IRB Exemption Status

To: Caroline Beam

CAMPUS MAIL

From: IRB Administration
Date: 1/02/2014
RE: Notice of IRB Exemption
Study #: 14-0141

Study Title: Perceptions and Enactment of Instructional Coaching in North Carolina

Exemption Category: (1) Normal Educational Practices and Settings
This study involves minimal risk and meets the exemption category cited above. In accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b) and University policy and procedures, the research activities described in the study materials are exempt from further IRB review.

Study Change: Proposed changes to the study require further IRB review when the change involves:

- an external funding source,
- the potential for a conflict of interest,
- a change in location of the research (i.e., country, school system, off site location),
- the contact information for the Principal Investigator,
- the addition of non-Appalachian State University faculty, staff, or students to the research team, or
- the basis for the determination of exemption. Standard Operating Procedure #9 cites examples of changes which affect the basis of the determination of exemption on page 3.

Investigator Responsibilities: All individuals engaged in research with human participants are responsible for compliance with University policies and procedures, and IRB determinations. The Principal Investigator (PI), or Faculty Advisor if the PI is a student, is ultimately responsible for ensuring the protection of research participants; conducting sound ethical research that complies with federal regulations, University policy and procedures; and maintaining study records. The PI should review the IRB's list of PI responsibilities.

To Close the Study: When research procedures with human participants are completed, please send the Request for Closure of IRB Review form to irb@appstate.edu.

If you have any questions, please contact the Research Protections Office at (828) 262-7981 (Julie) or (828) 262-2692 (Robin).

Best wishes with your research.

Appendix B: Recruitment Memo

To: Potential Dissertation Participants

From: Caroline Beam

CC:

Date: 12/14/13

Re: Perceptions and Enactment of Instructional Coaching Dissertation

My name is Caroline Armstrong Beam, and I am a doctoral student at Appalachian State University working towards a degree in Educational Leadership. I have varied experiences within the K-12 span: I have taught high school English and middle school Language Arts; now I work as an instructional coach. I finished my coursework in the spring and have now begun the journey of my dissertation, which has evolved from my own experiences as an instructional coach in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools. In my own experiences, I have felt that this role is often ambiguously or loosely described which impacts how it is interpreted and enacted. As I have navigated my own way through this role, I decided that perhaps hearing others' experiences and how they understand this role could have far-reaching effects for how this role is used in districts in the future.

The purpose of my dissertation is to provide research that informs how districts are able to move forward in strategically implementing the instructional coaching role. The questions that will guide my research are

1. How do instructional coaches understand their roles?
2. How do others understanding the instructional coaching role?
3. How does context impact understanding of the instructional coaching role?

I would like to answer these questions by developing relationships with instructional coaches, teachers, and administrators in order to conduct collaborative, dialogical interviews. I would also like to observe the work of instructional coaches with teachers. This dissertation will involve both interviews and observations. I am requesting to audio record interviews. Information will be kept strictly confidential and a pseudonym will be used in all notes and drafts of the work. Any identifiable information will be kept secure in a password-protected file that does not leave my filing cabinet at home. I will be the only person with access to any identifiable information.

There will be a series of three interviews that last no more than an hour each, and after each interview I will share my understanding of what has been communicated in order to give the interviewee an opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings. Interviews will be scheduled at a time and place that are convenient for all participants.

While I value your opinion and perspective, I recognize that your schedule may not allow for participation at this time. As such, it is absolutely ok to decline this opportunity.

Appendix C: Interviewee Consent Form

I agree to participate as an interviewee in this research project, which concerns instructional coaching and how instructional coaches and others (teachers and administrators) understand that role within the district. The timeline for this research is January 2014-March 2014. I understand that my comments will be audio recorded and transcribed and used for a dissertation to be conducted by Caroline Scott Armstrong Beam, Ed D student at Appalachian State University. The interview(s) will take place three separate times and will last no more than an hour. I understand that the only foreseeable risk is the loss of confidentiality though Caroline will de-identify data using pseudonyms and keep identifiable information in a password-protected file that does not leave her house. I also know that this study may benefit instructional coaches and districts in further honing best practices with teachers as well as impacting hiring and professional development for instructional coaches. In addition, both teachers and students stand to benefit from research that enhances instructional strategies that are used in classrooms.

I give Caroline Scott Armstrong Beam ownership of the files and transcripts from the interview(s) she conducts with me and understand that files and transcripts will be kept in the researcher's possession. I understand that information or quotations from audio files and transcripts will be used in a dissertation and could be published should those opportunities arise. The researcher will contact me for written permission for publication should that opportunity arise. I understand I will receive no compensation for the interviews.

I understand that the interview is voluntary, and I can end it at any time without consequence. I also understand that if I have questions about this research project, I can call Caroline Scott Armstrong Beam at (336) 816-1487 or contact Appalachian State University's Office of Research Protections at (828) 262-7981 or irb@appstate.edu.

☐ I request that my name **not** be used in connection with tapes, transcripts, or publications resulting from this interview.

☐ I request that my name **be used** in connection with tapes, transcripts, or publications resulting from this interview.

_____	_____
Name of Interviewer (printed)	Name of Interviewee (printed)
_____	_____
Signature of Interviewer	Signature of Interviewee

_____
Date(s) of Interview (s)

Appendix D: Instructional Coach Information Sheet

Participant Name:_____ Date:_____

Current title:_____

Length of time in current role:_____

Previous role:_____

Length of time in previous role:_____

With how many schools do you currently work?_____

With how many teachers do you currently work?_____

Contact Information:

Phone 1:_____

Phone 2:_____

Email address:_____

My preferred method of communication is:_____

Appendix E: Letter of Agreement

12/18/13

To the Appalachian Institutional Review Board (IRB):

I am familiar with Caroline Armstrong Beam's research project entitled Perceptions and Enactment of Instructional Coaching in North Carolina. I understand ***[agency/institution names***] involvement to be allowing employees to be interviewed, allowing collaboration between instructional coaches and teachers (when no students are present) to be observed, and allowing employees to share deidentified documents relating to the work of instructional coaching.

As the research team conducts this research project I understand and agree that:

- This research will be carried out following sound ethical principles and that it has been approved by the IRB at Appalachian State University.
- Employee participation in this project is strictly voluntary and not a condition of employment at ***[agency/institution name***]. There are no contingencies for employees who choose to participate or decline to participate in this project. There will be no adverse employment consequences as a result of an employee's participation in this study.
- To the extent confidentiality may be protected under State or Federal law, the data collected will remain confidential, as described in the protocol. The name of our agency or institution will [***not be/be***] reported in the results of the study.

Therefore, as a representative of [***agency name***], I agree that Caroline Armstrong Beam's research project may be conducted at our agency/institution, and that Caroline Armstrong Beam may assure participants that they may participate in interview, observations, and document review and provide responsive information without adverse employment consequences.

Sincerely,

[***name & title of agency/institutional authority***]

Appendix F: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Name:_____ Date:_____

Current title:_____

Length of time in current role:_____

Please describe the capacity in which you work with instructional coaches:

_____

_____

_____

Contact Information:

Phone 1:_____

Phone 2:_____

Email address:_____

My preferred method of communication is:_____

Appendix G: Observation Protocol

Notes:	Researcher's reactions and reflections to notes:	Participant's reactions and reflections to notes:

Appendix H: Interview Protocol for Instructional Coaches

I want to talk to you about your understanding of instructional coaching and your experiences related to your work as an instructional coach. I'm mostly interested in how you understand your role and how you enact your role. I have developed some guiding questions, but I'm open to hear any thoughts or experiences you have related to instructional coaching. As we move through the questions, I may pause to ask for clarification and/or restate things back to you to ensure that I am understanding and recording notes that accurately reflect your thoughts. I will take notes during the interview, and I will also record the interview. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Could you describe how you came to the instructional coaching role?
    a. What was the transition from teaching to coaching like?
    b. Could you describe the orientation you received into your role?
    c. In what ways did you feel prepared to take on this role?
    d. How did you deal with acceptance and credibility at your different schools/with your different teachers/administrators?
2. Could you describe the types of tasks/responsibilities you perform as a "routine" part of your job?
    a. Could you describe tasks/responsibilities that you see as lying outside your typical "routine" duties that you must also perform?
3. What is different about coaching than you originally expected?
4. If you were to draw a pie chart of how your time is spent, what would those categories and percentages of time spent on tasks look like?
5. Let's assume coaching has some real benefits and some real drawbacks—could you describe those benefits first and then those drawbacks?
6. How would you describe your coaching style—how do you coach?
7. Could you describe what it feels like to be an instructional coach?

8. How would you characterize your relationships with teachers, students, and principals/administrators?
    a. Describe the impact that power/perceived power may have had on your work with teachers/administrators.
9. In your view, what inputs from you get the biggest result with teachers and ultimately with students?
10. Describe the most memorable work you've done with a teacher…work that you look back on as effective and time well spent.
11. Since we last met, have you been thinking about things surrounding coaching that you would like to discuss?
12. How would you describe the impact of your work with teachers?
    a. What does that impact look like for students?
    b. What does it look like for teachers?
    c. What does it look like for a school?
    d. What does it look like for a district?
13. When you consider your work and your role within this district, how do you talk about your work to those who have never heard of instructional coaches?
14. When you consider the kinds of things you do on a daily basis, for which aspects of your role did you feel well prepared and for which did you feel less prepared?
    a. How can people be more prepared—what does professional development for instructional coaches look like?

Appendix I: Interview Protocol for Teachers

I want to talk to you about your understanding of instructional coaching and how you see that role working in your school and for you personally as a teacher. I'm mostly interested in how you understand that role and your perceptions of that role. I have developed some guiding questions, but I'm open to hear any thoughts or experiences you have related to instructional coaching. As we move through the questions, I may pause to ask for clarification and/or restate things back to you to ensure that I am understanding and recording notes that accurately reflect your thoughts. I will take notes during the interview, and I will also record the interview. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Could you describe how long you've worked with a coach and particularly this coach?
2. How would you describe the relationship you have with your coach?
3. In what ways do instructional coaches impact teachers' instruction and student learning?
4. If you were to look back on the most memorable/most helpful interaction with your coach, what does that time look like?
5. If you were to consider things that make coaching work/effective/successful and things that impede coaching success, what would you put into each category beginning with factors that contribute to success?

Appendix J: Interview Protocol for Administrators

I want to talk to you about your understanding of instructional coaching and how you see that role working in your school/district. I'm mostly interested in how you understand that role and your perceptions of that role. I have developed some guiding questions, but I'm open to hear any thoughts or experiences you have related to instructional coaching. As we move through the questions, I may pause to ask for clarification and/or restate things back to you to ensure that I am understanding and recording notes that accurately reflect your thoughts. I will take notes during the interview, and I will also record the interview. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Describe your relationship with the instructional coaches in your school/district.
2. Describe the function of instructional coaches in your school/district as you understand it.
3. How do instructional coaches impact teachers' instruction and student learning?
4. If you were to consider things that make coaching work/effective/successful and things that impede coaching success, what would you put into each category beginning with factors that contribute to success?

Vita

Caroline Scott Armstrong Beam was raised in Stokes County, North Carolina on a family tobacco farm by her parents, Randy and Sally Armstrong. She attended Stokes County Public Schools throughout her elementary and secondary educational years. During those formative years, she was inspired to pursue teaching as a career by her middle school math teacher, Mr. Reid; her high school United States history teacher, Mrs. Moore; and her high school English teacher, Mr. Clary. As a senior in high school, Dr. Beam applied for and won a Teaching Fellows Scholarship, and she continued her undergraduate education in the fall of 2000 at Appalachian State University. She was awarded a Bachelor of Science in Secondary English Education in 2004 and returned to Stokes County Schools to teach high school English. In the fall of 2007, Dr. Beam accepted a position in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools as a middle school Language Arts teacher. She began study towards a Master of School Administration degree in 2009 and was awarded the degree in July, 2011. In the same month, Dr. Beam commenced work on her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership, also at Appalachian State University. She was awarded her doctorate in 2014.

Dr. Beam currently works as an instructional coach, and she resides on a farm in rural North Carolina with her husband and their dogs, cats, cows, and chickens.