

RATHBONE, RITA J., Ed.D. *Teacher Leadership, Power, and the Gendered Space of Teaching: Intersections and Discourses*. (2015)
Directed by Dr. Carl Lashley. 172 pp.

Relying on critical feminist understandings of power, this study explores how the gendered expectations and intersectional identity of women teachers impacts their negotiation of power in the practice of teacher leadership and social justice advocacy. This study takes a critical stance towards the existing body of literature and challenges the current feminized and patriarchal understanding of teacher leadership. Using a collaborative autoethnographic approach, a group of practicing teacher leaders examined their lived experiences as teacher leaders. The participants reported experiencing gendered expectations in their teaching contexts of support/nurturing, passivity, collaboration, normative gender expression, and all-encompassing teacher identity. Practicing teacher leadership in this gendered environment was a balancing act that required the ability to be a “chameleon.” The complexity of teaching and intricate nature of connections and networks allowed teachers to pick and choose a variety of strategies and resources with which to negotiate power.

The study finds that much of the work of teacher leadership involved negotiating the interpersonal and cultural domains of power in order to develop coalitions of diverse stakeholders to resist the oppressive forces found in the structural and disciplinary domains. The teachers reported often having to “play against” negative assumptions of their ability to be leaders based on race and gender. The study concludes that the scholarly understanding of the practice of teacher leadership must be redefined to include the social justice focus of much of its practice, the intricacy of teachers’ networks, an

understanding of power as multidirectional and multidimensional, the nuance of gendered norms found in teaching, and the unresolved paradoxes that teacher leaders face every day.

TEACHER LEADERSHIP, POWER, AND THE GENDERED SPACE OF TEACHING:
INTERSECTIONS AND DISCOURSES

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Greensboro
2015

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Date of Acceptance by Committee

June 8, 2015
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to my participants who gave so generously of their time and of themselves. Thanks to my family, friends, and colleagues for their support and patience, especially my dear husband, Matt, and my fearless leader, Renee Price. Thanks to my committee of talented professors (Dr. Leila Villaverde, Dr. Craig Peck, Dr. Rick Reitzug, and my chair, Dr. Carl Lashley) for skillfully fanning the flames of my passion for learning.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

My dissertation journey began with a series of observations. While my experience was solely as a classroom teacher, almost all of my peers in my doctoral program in educational leadership were current school or district administrators. I realized very quickly that the “us against them” mentality between teachers and administrators was not only very real; it was much worse than I had imagined. As a teacher committed to the work of social justice in education, I had come to see the hierarchical, bureaucratic structure of schools and those that inhabit those roles as powerful obstacles to the work of social justice. I quickly saw that many administrators, whose passion and dedication to social justice equaled my own, were just as convinced they were the heroes and that teachers were the true obstacles to social justice in schools. The messy reality I came to realize is that all educators are part of a complex system that both challenges and perpetuates oppressive practices, regardless of our best intentions.

A few years ago, I went to two separate events in one night. I attended the Defenders of Justice awards program hosted by the North Carolina Justice Center and I watched lawyers and politicians get recognized for their social justice work. Next, I went to the Teacher of the Year awards program for my district. The winning teacher was an English as a Second Language teacher from my school. Being familiar with this teacher’s work as a relentless advocate for undocumented and disenfranchised students

and families, I was quite convinced that she had likely accomplished just as much for the cause of social justice as the lawyers and politicians at the Justice Center event. Yet her accomplishments were described in passive language that focused on her role as a nurturer, supporter, and facilitator—not the forceful language that had been used to describe the “defenders of justice.” In the program for the awards, the “defenders of justice” were described with words like “protecting,” “reforming,” “expanding opportunities,” “upholding,” “advocating,” “fighting,” “tenacity,” “breaking down,” and “standing up” while the news report and introduction of the teacher used words like “foster,” “embrace,” “support,” and “help.” I began to wonder about the role of gendered divisions of labor in this discrepancy. Yes, the teacher was a woman, but so were some of the “defenders of justice.” Yes, the teacher’s work was primarily directed towards children, but so was the work of some of the “defenders of justice.” It seemed to me this difference could be explained by the fact that *teacher* is a role that is gendered feminine while *lawyer* and *politician* are roles that are gendered masculine.

I entered my doctoral program in educational leadership in a non-licensure track. I observed that while in my doctoral program I routinely had to defend and explain my choice not to pursue school administration as a career. My classmates and professors seemed confused—I clearly had the necessary leadership ability. Why would I *waste* my talent by *just* being a teacher? My explanations of my passion for teacher leadership and its value seemed to fall mostly on deaf ears. My peers clearly privileged positional, hierarchical, and patriarchal power. During this time, I accepted a position as an instructional coach. Meeting regularly with over 50 other instructional coaches in my

district, I was immediately aware of the fact that they were all women. A number of these women held administrative licensure or doctoral degrees, and some had even been administrators at one point in time. Yet they seemed to prefer their current teacher leadership roles—many had served in this role for at least a decade.

This series of observations made me think more critically about teacher leadership, gender, and the feminization of teaching. It appears that many women teachers with leadership potential or even training are choosing teacher leadership over administration (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Leonard, Petta, & Porter, 2012; Wynn, 2005). A search conducted by Leonard et al. (2012) identified 21 graduate level degree or certificate programs in teacher leadership in the U.S. This is a dramatic increase from the seven programs identified by York-Barr and Duke (2004). Leonard et al. (2012) found evidence that some of these new programs were developed because teachers were applying to existing educational administration programs while expressing they were not interested in becoming administrators. Clearly universities feel there is a growing market for leadership development by teachers who do not wish to enter traditional positional leadership.

The literature seems to conclude that capable women teacher leaders do not pursue administration due to the lack of adequate compensation for the level of responsibility, the stress of the job, the time commitment—and the incompatibility of those factors with family commitments (Adams & Hambright, 2004). While these may very well be true, my lived experience suggests that there is a lot more involved. Adams and Hambright (2004) were concerned that women teachers in their university teacher

leadership program were not choosing to pursue administrative positions. When surveyed, the teachers reported that the principalship involved excessive politics and dealing with difficult people. However, teachers already navigate plenty of politics and deal with plenty of difficult people.

Wynn (2005) conducted a more in-depth study on the topic and concluded that part of the explanation seemed related to teacher self-efficacy in both personal and collective terms—leadership skilled women teachers were fulfilled and satisfied by their work in the classroom and as teacher leaders and therefore did not feel a need to pursue other leadership positions. Wynn also found a strong preference among the women teacher leaders for working with students rather than adults. The teachers described adults as stubborn, negative, and often unprofessional. The teachers saw an incompatibility between the relationship building needed to teach and the perceived personal distance needed to be an effective administrator.

The teachers' responses in Wynn's (2005) study highlighted their internalization of women being naturally nurturing and caring and therefore more suited to teaching while men were more "business-like," "driven," and "logical" and therefore more suited to administrative roles.

The participants associated women with the role of teacher and nurturer, and they, in turn, nurtured their students and colleagues. They did not associate nurturing with school administration, nor did they view this role as compatible with their own identities. (p. 105)

At the same time, the teachers highlighted the fact that administrative power had its limits:

By outward appearances, women follow the rules and mind the boundaries, but when the classroom door closes, they are doing the important work of educating children, regardless of the male-established rules and boundaries. (p. 98)

Wynn concluded that the leadership-capable women chose teacher leadership because of their sense of self-efficacy as teachers and teacher leaders and also their perception of the administrator role as incompatible with their socialized identity. While these findings are intriguing, again it seems that there is much more to be learned about the role of gender and teachers' intersectional identity in their practice of teacher leadership.

To further explore the complexities of teacher leadership, I deeply examined my own reasons for valuing and engaging in teacher leadership. I completed an analysis of a wide variety of assignments, papers, journal entries, and self-reflective writing that I had completed over the course of my teaching career including work related to my original National Board Certification and renewal, Master's degree, and Doctoral degree. I built upon this approach and conducted my further study as a collaborative autoethnography in which I examined my own teacher leadership practice in greater depth in a collaborative process with four other participants. The method and data we generated will be discussed at length in Chapters III and IV.

Self-Reflection

I am a White female in my late 30s. Until the age of 22, I lived in the unique cultural space of Southern Appalachia in the context of entrenched, generational, and systemic poverty. In my family, I was a first generation college student—an opportunity made possible by a North Carolina Teaching Fellows Scholarship. My family also had a variety of experiences with systems of power—my father's experience with the military

draft and his union activity, my mother's experience being a child in the foster care system, my neuro-atypical brother and his experience in public school, and our experience with stints on various forms of public assistance. These early experiences developed my understanding of the systems of power, privilege, and oppression; led me on a path to a career in education; and informed the social justice focus of my work as an educator.

Most of my 15 years of experience as an educator has been in a small Southern city, a community with a majority of students of color, including a large and growing Hispanic and bilingual population (13% of the population of the county based on 2013 U.S. census data) The city has both high poverty rates (18% live below the poverty level) and a diverse, well-educated privileged class (45% have at least a bachelor's degree). I have been involved in a wide variety of both formal and informal teacher leadership roles including department chair, association representative, professional learning community leader, a member of various advisory committees, curriculum development teams, School Improvement Team chair, and instructional coach/curriculum specialist.

Unlike many, I did not become a teacher because I loved school or have an unusually strong fondness for children. While I did have some wonderful teachers who inspired me, I usually did not enjoy school. In analyzing my choice to become a teacher, I used these words in writing a philosophy of education during my Master's program: "I am a teacher because I thrive on the mental, emotional, and creative challenges I face every day and enjoy pushing and challenging my students." My motivation as a teacher

is both the personal challenge as well as the reward of facilitating powerful learning experiences for others and the desire to work towards a more socially just community.

One of the aspects of teaching that I have found most challenging is the feminine gendered expectations that come with the job. I expressed these thoughts in a journal entry:

One of the most disorienting aspects of moving into a world of “middle-class norms” was an unexpected loss of power, the constriction of more tightly defined roles for women, and the discomfort of a narrower view of femininity.

Here is part of a journal entry written after the experience I referred to earlier of attending both the Defenders of Justice Awards and the Teacher of the Year Awards program in the same evening:

This was the unidentified grain of sand that had been in my brain irritating me for my whole teaching career. The passive and nurturing ideal for teachers had always seemed a little strange to me considering that my formative years were spent in a cultural environment with a very different definition of femininity. However, I had never fully recognized the oppressive and disempowering effect of this feminization. First teachers are socialized to be feminized, timid, nurturing, supportive, etc. Then these very traits are used to justify the low status of teaching. These traits are also taken advantage of. Teachers are routinely exposed to what I like to call “emotional blackmail.” They are given a guilt trip of, “well, if you really cared about students, you would . . .” Apparently, our schools are currently designed for the comfort of adults and we must sacrifice this for student needs. There seems to be a perception that if teachers are empowered, they will simply do things in their own best interest, at the expense of the best interest of students. This is simply a different type of patriarchy—seeing those in this feminized profession as weak-minded, morally feeble, and child-like.

It is clear from these passages that I had developed a heightened awareness of gendered expectations placed on me as a woman teacher within a middle class cultural space. It is

also evident that I see engaging in teacher leadership as an act of resistance within a feminist context. Teacher leadership provides me with more comfortable *power with* relationships as part of what I see as a more effective and more *appropriate* form of leadership.

In considering what has shaped my practice of teacher leadership and my preference for teacher leadership over positional leadership, the reasons seem to fall along several lines:

- practical considerations,
- a desire for intellectual challenge,
- my ideological beliefs in democratic public schools,
- my interpretation that in many ways teacher leaders are actually more powerful than administrative leaders, and
- my perception of my individual leadership strengths and weaknesses.

Practically speaking, based on my teacher licensure level in my state, my salary would not change from my teaching position to an assistant principal position. Similar to Wynn's (2005) participants, I have little motivation to take on a perceived larger workload—especially when the tasks are often mundane or uninspiring. Like many, teaching appeals to me because of my love of learning and a passion for a subject matter and I find administrative tasks do not provide enough mental and intellectual challenge. I expressed this sentiment in a class assignment:

My former principal had me almost convinced that I should go into administration. After spending the summer taking on a lot of assistant principal

responsibilities during our school's transition to a new principal, I began to reconsider that choice.

Here are some thoughts I have expressed regarding school leadership from various reflective assignments:

My parents' personal experiences along with the strong independent streak of the Appalachian people (heightened by centuries of exploitation and denigration) instilled in me a certain level of distrust of traditional forms of authority.

School systems must break down the rigid hierarchies that separate stakeholders and replicate structures of oppression. Too many education leaders do not lead with integrity. They may be dedicated to social justice for students, but they use power coercively towards these goals—especially towards teachers and parents.

I have been told frequently about a shift in perspective that happens when one moves to school and district leadership. Perspective is one thing, but what I see shifting in the educational leaders around me is their moral compasses. The most concerning thing about this is that these leaders seem to be oblivious (or intentionally ignorant) of the fact that their moral compasses are askew. Here is where we get into the sticky issues of leadership. How do we decide if moral compasses are simply slightly out of alignment or that one is plumb and others are not?

These passages demonstrate both a socialized dislike of traditional authority structures as well as belief in the value of more democratic, flatter, inclusive, and collaborative leadership structures. Also, similar to some of Wynn's (2005) participants, I seem to fear that an administrative position might force me to compromise moral principles I value. At another point in time I wrote, "I will follow my moral compass off a cliff if that is where it leads me. I can do that as a teacher, I cannot do that as a principal."

Underlying this belief in the greater freedom to operate with integrity as a teacher seems to be my perception that teachers are more removed from the hegemonic

leadership structure and are therefore more capable of providing resistance to oppressive forces. Like Wynn's (2005) participants, I have found great self-efficacy in my success as teacher leader, and I have spoken truth to power as a teacher in ways that I believe would not be possible for an administrator. Working directly with students provides a moral high ground that is of strategic value. While the protections provided by teacher career status in my state area quite slim, administrators have not even this protection.

In my analysis, my socialization in the cultural space of Appalachia has shaped personality factors that I perceive to be more compatible with the collaborative and *power with* nature of teacher leadership than the *power over* nature of positional leadership:

One of the beliefs most central to my identity is a need to live every aspect of my life with the utmost humility, honesty, and responsibility. To be pretentious, showy, arrogant, or treat others as inferior is completely unacceptable. Appalachian culture also values pride, but only when pride and humility reside in a complex and carefully balanced system. One of the most foreign concepts to me is the idea of "professionalism." Coming from a cultural context where expressions of passion and emotion are accepted and attempts to conceal or suppress emotion are considered pretentious, dishonest, and rude, then "professionalism" seems cold, insincere, and impersonal. The idea that somehow personal and professional can be separated seems like a rather silly notion to me.

I was never taught to channel or compartmentalize emotions at a sophisticated level because of a cultural belief that doing so is an undesirable personality trait. In many ways it is a manifestation of many of my strengths: my passion, my honesty and integrity, my openness, my humor, and the good intentions behind my actions. This same emotional honesty and intensity that is problematic in professional interactions is part of what makes me a fabulous teacher.

This acceptance of displays of passion, emotion, and even anger within an Appalachian cultural context is still evident in my speech pattern (as well as others from the region). I

have found that in other contexts the volume and intensity of my speech is considered odd or inappropriate. Complicating this cultural disconnect is that within middle class norms, displays of emotion are often considered feminine and women who are perceived as emotional or angry are easily dismissed and disregarded. My Whiteness and education level (while providing many privileges) also lead many to dismiss any cultural disconnect as simply uncouth or unprofessional behavior. In my opinion, teacher leadership provides me with a context in which this facet of my identity becomes a strength, not a weakness.

I also perceive my socialization has led me to lack the ego, competitiveness, and goal-orientation that I believe positional leadership requires:

I have learned in my two years of primarily working with adults instead of students that adults really suck. 90% of the time students will pleasantly surprise you (eventually, sometimes it takes them a while). 90% of the time, adults disappoint you. The difference is ego—children are blissfully free of adult egos. I am tired of negotiating around the egos of adults all day.

I also generally see only the best in people and tend to have faith and trust in everyone. While I don't think I am naïve, I am frequently caught by surprise by the actions of adults around me and have a difficult time understanding others' motives when they are different from mine.

I have also learned that the best way to deal with those who think they are better than others is to let them continue to think so. They can't handle the truth anyway and why would you share the gift of humility with someone who does not deserve it?

Like Wynn's (2005) participants, I have expressed a preference for working with students over adults. Reflecting on that preference, I came to the conclusion that it was a result of my socialized distaste for adult egos and the fact that I find the behavior of teenagers

more predictable and understandable to me. The value of humility instilled in me appears to preclude the development of the type of ego I perceive to be necessary for positional leadership while also making it difficult for me to interpret and predict ego driven actions in others. I also find myself confused by others' actions that are driven by competition and goal orientation:

I am not sure that my motivation engine is the right model when most other education leaders are competitive and intensely driven to reach success defined in ways I do not understand.

I am not highly competitive or goal oriented (and I tend to be slightly judgmental of those who are). I still accomplish things, but I just don't understand the logic of creating a goal. This might very well be the result of the fatalism of Appalachian culture that tends to focus on the present, not the future, and encourage living day by day. Of course within a mainstream culture that is essentially a cult of goal-setting, this is seen as a negative. While there may indeed be negative consequences for some for this type of thinking, I personally find it very freeing.

Summary

My self-reflection revealed my socialization has played a large role in my choice to value and pursue teacher leadership over administrative leadership. Wynn (2005) concluded that the teachers in her study saw the role of teacher as more compatible with their socialized identity as women and the role of administrators more compatible with a masculine identity. Personally, I am impacted less by my socialization to a gender role than to a specific class and cultural context that cast hierarchical leadership and the traits associated with those roles in a negative light. Practically speaking, I perceive being an administrator would create a larger workload with less of the intellectual challenge I

value for the same pay. More importantly though, I find teacher leadership to be fulfilling and more aligned with my ideals.

Conceptualizing Teacher Leadership

Administrative leadership and teacher leadership, of course, do not exist in a binary relationship. Teacher leadership often has positional elements (especially in cases such as department chairs, instructional coaches, union roles, etc.) and other connections to hierarchical power (such as seniority). The power of administrators is often limited by concerns such as public relations, the threat of lawsuits, and the influence of voters on elected school board members. Administrative leadership can also be collaborative and democratic in nature. It is inaccurate to conceptualize the issue as a choice between being an administrator and being a teacher leader or to see such a choice as a rejection of positional leadership instead of a commitment to instructional leadership. Many administrators were teacher leaders at other points in their careers and some teacher leaders were administrators at other points in their careers. In some educational contexts, educators fill roles that do not fall into either category. However, what is interesting and relevant is that the two roles are highly gendered in our schools—*administration is masculine and teaching is feminine*.

Those exercising leadership in educational settings have likely sought out the context that is available to them where they experience the most self-efficacy, *based on their socialized identity*. Issues of race impact the enactment of leadership as well. Teachers of color have historically faced both explicit and implicit barriers to positional authority within schools. Such barriers still exist in many contexts. The socialization of

women and men impacts their conception and enactment of leadership. My intersectional identity impacts not only my choice to engage in teacher leadership; it also impacts how I practice teacher leadership (both in my choices and the cultural constraints that limit my leadership practice).

Reviewing the body of literature on teacher leadership in light of my self-reflection, I was disappointed to see overwhelming silence regarding issues of gender and race. This omission is glaring considering the percentage of women teachers, the well-documented feminized landscape of teaching, and the extensive body of literature on issues of gender and race in administrative leadership. In considering the practice of teacher leadership, scholars had largely ignored the impact of the teacher's intersectional identity—the impact of various forms of oppression based on identity factors such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, class, sexual orientation, disability status, etc. which cannot be considered in isolation but in how they intersect within the experience of individuals. I recognized both intersectionality as well as my social justice impulse as having a large impact on my practice as a teacher leader. The literature has also failed to fully explore the complexities and nuances of power that I have experienced in the context of teacher leadership. Power is “multidimensional and multidirectional” and in the complex contexts in which teachers work, it often flows in unexpected and surprising ways (Fuller, 2013, p. 3).

My review of literature suggests that scholars have accepted a conceptual separation of teacher leadership from teacher instructional practice. This is based on the fact that teacher leadership is directed primarily to adults—colleagues, supervisors, the

larger community, and/or parents whereas instructional practice is directed towards students. The literature also conceptualizes teacher leadership separately from educational leadership based on the absence of real positional authority in the practice of teacher leadership (Neumerski, 2012). However, through a critical lens, these distinctions are problematic. Most teachers are women, and the work of teaching is gendered feminine. Given this context, it is possible these distinctions simply reflect a gendered view of teacher leadership. A critical analysis highlights these important ideological questions:

- Why should *teacher leadership* be a separate category from *educational leadership*, which is almost exclusively related to school administration? Is the distinction between positional and non-positional authority really clear, or are these just binary, gendered definitions and categories?
- Is teacher leadership really different from what all teachers do every day? If so, how?
- What underlying myths and assumptions about teachers and teaching are highlighted by a need to define *teacher leadership* separately from *teaching* and from *administration*? What underlying myths and assumptions about leadership and gender roles are also inherent in such a definition?

My review of literature highlighted the fact that researchers overwhelmingly define teacher leadership in feminized terms, repeatedly focusing on the role of teacher leader as collaborator, supporter, nurturer, and cheerleader.

In many ways, this is a reflection of tensions that have existed in public education for well over 100 years. The Progressive Movement dominated educational discourse for the first half of the 20th century—at least in the world of White schools. Communities of color faced very different challenges and cultural traditions that altered the nature and level of impact of various progressive style reforms in segregated environments (Johnson, Pitre, & Johnson, 2014; Sadovnik & Semel, 2002). White Progressive scholars and practitioners generally fell into one of two camps. Pedagogical progressives emphasized reforms related to child-centered classrooms and curriculum and a more democratic climate in the schools. Administrative progressives on the other hand, focused on the application of scientific management principals to make public schools more centralized and create efficient bureaucracies, systems, and standardized curriculum and instructional practice (Rousmaniere, 2002). The tension between the vision of schools as more democratic and collaborative or more efficient and bureaucratic is still evident today.

Looking at current policy work on teacher leadership, there is a clear obsession with efficiency and expanding the “impact and power” of quality teachers (Public Impact, 2015, p. 1). The Opportunity Culture Initiative is a project from North Carolina based think-tank Public Impact funded by various corporate foundations. It has proposed and is piloting a complex, multi-tiered career pathways system that allows all teachers to have “paid career opportunities dependent upon their excellence, leadership, and student reach” (Public Impact, 2015, p. 1). These opportunities include teacher leaders who lead multi-classroom teams with the authority to tailor the roles and instructional time of other teachers, subject specialization in elementary classrooms, remote teaching through the

use of technology and paraprofessional support, and time-technology swaps that replace some instruction with self-paced digital learning supervised by paraprofessionals.

This “opportunity culture” is accomplished by “combining extended reach staffing models with reallocation of other spending to teacher pay”—that is to reduce the number of teachers to just those judged to be the highest quality, increase the number of students that those master teachers impact, and use low-paid, unskilled staff to supervise students at other times (Hassel & Hassel, 2013, p. 1). This vision of a clearly articulated hierarchy of teacher leadership roles with differentiated pay sees teachers as assets to be used efficiently and is a direct descendent of the scientific management tradition in public schools.

In today’s education reform climate, there are fewer voices focused on the fostering of democracy in our public schools. However, there are some scholars in the teacher leadership policy debate that emphasize teacher leadership as a tool for empowerment and challenging the status quo. Another North Carolina based think-tank, The Center for Teaching Quality, has proposed the notion of teacher leaders as “teacherpreneurs” (Berry, Byrd, & Wieder, 2013). The teacherpreneur vision is one of a truly professionalized teaching force providing meaningful teacher voice to education policy with the “hope that teachers will no longer be isolated into individual classrooms with the doors closed . . . [and] no longer be controlled by meddlesome advocates and rigid bureaucrats” (Berry et al., 2013, p. 16).

Berry and his colleagues want teachers to “use their knowledge of students as well as teaching and learning to dream, think, plan, act, and react like entrepreneurs—and

turn the rigid, pyramid-like organizational structure of schools upside down” (Berry et al., 2013, p. 19). Michelle Collay (2011) conceptualizes “everyday” teacher leadership that encourages teachers to recognize the ways in which they already lead and to engage in leadership through processes aligned with a democratic society such as collaboration, discussion, and critical inquiry. She writes:

Conventional leadership requires conventional followership and the trappings of leading and following limit professional action. Teachers work in settings that demand sophisticated responses to complex problems, yet are expected to do what they’re told or be labeled resistant to reform efforts. Conflicting expectations lead some to challenge the authoritative relationship between themselves and principals . . . Even those models that sound more democratic come under fire by those that study reform. One example is the rhetoric of “distributed leadership,” a catchall term that implies more people have authority to make decision. Little research supports the efficacy of this approach and, like many recommendations that emerge from studies of school leadership, the principal is charged to do the distributing. Teachers are *allowed* to have authority over their work, *chosen* for tasks, or *given* responsibility. In each case, teachers are subjected to, not agents of, leadership. (Collay, 2011, p. 25)

Considered through a critical feminist lens, this tension between leadership in schools that promotes democracy and that which promotes hierarchy can also be seen as the tension between hegemonic masculinity and feminist practices:

The rise of educational bureaucracies was linked to a particular hegemonic masculinity which, through rule-governed behavior, distanced itself from the messiness of daily life in which women’s voices were thus subjugated. This gendered division of labour was legitimised by organisational, sociological, psychological, and political theory which assumed the experience of men could be universalized. (Blackmore, 2006, p. 188)

The legacy of scientific management is also a legacy of hegemonic masculinity. Griffiths (2006) puts forth the thought-provoking idea that the feminization of teaching is not a

problem, but a solution: “The feminization of teaching, insofar as it exists, is to be welcomed because it provides a space for resisting hegemonic masculinity” (p. 387). Galman (2012) applies this theory in her research: “Whereas hegemonic masculinity emphasizes individualism and competition within a rigid hierarchy, feminized practices represent the inverse: embodiment, diversity, and a nonhierarchical, democratic distribution of and relationship to power” (p. 16). These two extremes exist in a dialectal relationship within our schools—they are both “problematic sites of deprofessionalization, insufficient remuneration, pastoral control, and sex-segregation . . . [and] pockets of women’s autonomy, sites of quiet resistance to hegemony and sources of informal social support for women and subaltern men” (p. 45).

It is possible to conceptualize current educational reforms that increase competition (by ending tenure and/or adding merit pay) and adding layers of hierarchy, accountability, and surveillance as a hegemonic response to this pocket of resistance. In this context, non-positional teacher leadership can be seen as a feminist practice of resistance to various forces of oppression. A frequently cited barrier to teacher leadership is the “prevailing norm of egalitarianism which fosters the view that teachers who step up to leadership roles are stepping out of line” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 272). What Griffiths (2006) sees as a valuable source of solidarity, democracy, and resistance to the negative forces of hegemonic masculinity, York-Barr and Duke (2004) describe as “crab bucket culture”—the metaphor being that “when one is crabbing, no lid is required to keep the crabs in the bucket because crabs will reach up and drag each other down should any attempt to climb out” (p. 272).

York-Barr and Duke's (2004) analogy of the "crab bucket" is both reflected in and directly referenced throughout the teacher leadership literature. Even conceptions of teacher leadership that question some aspects of hierarchical power often unquestioningly embrace meritocracy, individual achievement, and credentialing processes. They also generally accept power as a zero sum game, not more feminist understandings of power. While Fredrick Hess (2015) encourages teachers to "bust the cage" of invisible assumptions and norms surrounding themselves within a public school system, he also writes:

Cage-busters believe that *management*, not teachers, ought to be blamed if management fails to address mediocrity anywhere in a school system but that *teachers* ought to insist that management do its duty. If teachers don't do that, cage-busters believe that they'll have trouble convincing observers of their professionalism and commitment to excellence. (p. 17)

Teachers who want a major role in shaping education policy need to earn the trust of lawmakers . . . educators are in an *asymmetrical* relationship with the lawmakers who control budgets, write policy, and legislate accountability systems. Think of a teacher dealing with students. Both teacher and student ought to try to earn the other's trust. But the teacher gets to set the rules, which means that students stand to gain more by winning the teacher's trust than vice versa. Such is life. (p. 207)

Escaping this kind of standstill begins with cage-busting teachers ready to step out of their classrooms, deal with policy makers in good faith, and make teacher leadership more than an empty phrase. It requires teachers to champion excellence, identify important problems, offer concrete solutions, and bring those solutions to life. The more teachers do that, the more trust they'll win, the more policymakers will back off, and the more room they will have to put their expertise and passion to work. (p. xv)

Hess (2015) does not clarify how, when, or why teachers lost (or failed to gain) the "trust" of policymakers. He does briefly mention the feminization of teaching and

also mentions the legacy teacher unionization that he feels aligned the work of teaching with a factory model instead of a professional model. He spends much more time criticizing teachers (in a patronizing tone) for being vitriolic, uncooperative, unwilling to accept necessary measures of accountability, and willing to tolerate mediocrity within their own ranks. Overall, his picture of teacher leadership (as well as many others in the literature) is grounded in a rather naïve understanding of the nature of power and an internalized acceptance of patriarchy and leadership and followership as well as a rejection of more feminist practices.

It is also notable that Hess's (2015) book on teacher leadership highlights 37 men teachers and 34 women teachers as examples of "cage-busting" teachers—hardly a representative reflection of a workforce comprised of 80% or more women. Berry et al. (2013) highlight seven women and four men as "teacherpreneurs" yet in their descriptions of those that failed to be successful in hybrid teacher leadership roles, they list four women and one man. On the other hand, Collay (2011) includes vignettes and descriptions of the teacher leadership practices of 37 women and six men, much more representative of the demographics of the teacher work force.

Both past and current conceptualization of teacher leadership often place teacher leadership in the context of the professionalization of teaching. The logic is that teachers should be granted the same autonomy and be held to the same high standards as professionals such as lawyers and doctors. The "cage-busting" model from Hess (2015), the "teacherpreneur" model from Berry et al. (2013) and the "opportunity culture" model (Hassel & Hassel, 2013) as well as many others in the body of literature highlight the

importance of making teaching a true profession. However, Madeline Grumet (2010) counters this idea:

Professionalism rests on the assumptions that there is a cohort of highly trained people who have mastered particular kinds of knowledge that warrant their clients' trust . . . But the power of education in our society does not rest on secret knowledge [but] . . . its claims to democracy. (p. 61)

Grumet suggests that mystifying the work of teachers moves schooling further away from the practice of democracy. Teaching and teacher leadership as a feminist practice calls for solidarity and genuine collaboration with the school community precluding the separation of “professionalism” it is usually defined. Hess (2015), on the other hand, believes that “in all walks of life, there’s a deep-seated desire to trust the expertise of professionals” (p. 19). He also decries the activist actions of teachers:

Angry chants and vitriolic signage are not how physicians, lawyers, bankers, or Marines have claimed influence or made their voices heard. These tactics are more the stuff of aggrieved college students and striking factory workers. If teachers want to be treated as professionals, they need to act the part. (p. 196)

Hess ignores the obstacles that the overwhelmingly female teacher workforce, who are often serving families and communities that are disempowered and disenfranchised, experience in the process of having their voices heard or being treated as professionals. Considering the practice of teacher leadership as a feminist practice breaks down binaries, brings forth tensions, and highlights counter-perspectives that scholars have failed to fully address within the teacher leadership literature.

Summary

In describing teacher leadership, the literature as a whole reinforces traditional, patriarchal, and hierarchical school structures. Discussions of teacher leadership in general fail to consider feminist conceptions of power as “multidimensional and multidirectional” (Fuller, 2013, p. 3). Scholars repeatedly position teacher leadership as focused on student learning within the acceptable parameters of district, state, and federal mandates; curriculum; and societal dictates that reinforce systems of oppression and gendered labor. The literature is generally lacking in an exploration of teacher leadership as a practice in service to the work of social justice (Hilty, 2011; Podjasek, 2009). As a result, our understanding of the practice of teacher leadership is incomplete and policy built on this knowledge is likely reinforcing gendered divisions of labor and systems of oppression. A hegemonically White, masculine, middle class definition of *leadership* often excludes many of the leadership practices of women, people of color, and those from other class strata.

Working from the assumption that successful teacher leadership towards improved outcomes for students and a more socially just society is desirable, then we must include this context in order to truly understand the practice of such teacher leadership and therefore encourage and foster it. Considering the gendered nature of teachers’ work, it is very possible that teacher leadership is being described by researchers in unacknowledged feminized terms, that the practice of teacher leadership is enacted in feminized ways due to the socialized identities of teachers, or that teacher leadership enacted in a feminized form is most successful in the feminine gendered

environment in which teachers work (or some combination of all of these). The simple fact is that the feminized aspects of teaching have not been explored as part of teacher leadership research enough to provide clarity on this issue.

Rationale and Research Questions

Placing a critical lens on the concept of teacher leadership gave focus to meaningful research questions. At issue is *who* is defining teacher leadership and *how* they are choosing to define it. This appears to be a means to control and direct the power of teacher leadership towards various policy agendas. Missing from the literature is an explicit examination of the gendered context in which teacher leadership is practiced, the landscape of multidirectional and multifaceted power that teacher leaders navigate, and the role of intersectional teacher identity in the practice of teacher leadership. My research was guided by the desire for sense-making of the practice of teacher leadership within this richer context. I defined the following research questions to guide my inquiry towards that objective.

1. How has teacher leadership been defined? By whom? Whose interests do these definitions of teacher leadership serve?
2. How do the gendered aspects of teaching affect how teacher leadership is defined and enacted?
3. How do the raced, classed, and gendered/heteronormed aspects of teachers' identities affect how they enact teacher leadership?
4. How is power negotiated by teacher leaders?

Overview of Methodology

In order to address such complex research questions, I chose to build on my self-reflection using a collaborative autoethnographic approach. The researcher and four other active teacher leaders explored the research questions through self-reflective writing and four in-person focus group discussions. Autoethnography uses “personal stories as windows to the world, through which [participants] *interpret* how their selves are connected to their sociocultural contexts and how the contexts give meaning to their experiences and perspectives” (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013, pp. 18–19).

Collaborative autoethnography uses multiple autoethnographic perspectives and a collaborative approach to sense-making from shared data. This process adds rigor to the model of self-interrogation, collectively explores researcher subjectivity, and produces a richer final product. In its purest form, collaborative autoethnography includes collaboration through sharing autoethnographic products, group probing and sense-making, more individual reflection, more group sharing, collaborative data review, collaborative writing, and shared authorship (Chang et al., 2013). Given the nature of dissertation work, the participants in this study had a more limited role in data analysis and no role in writing the dissertation. There is one precedent for this approach in work by Lieberman and Friedrich (2010). That research project collected “vignettes” from 31 teacher leaders that were published with the authors’ real names along with the researchers’ interpretations of these vignettes.

Researcher Positionality

My biases include a firm belief in the importance of democratic, inclusive, and socially just public schooling. My assumptions about teacher leadership entering the research were:

1. Teacher leaders are generally motivated by a desire for both personal fulfillment and better outcomes for students—often specifically more socially just outcomes. That is, I assumed that actions of teacher leaders were generally motivated by a social justice impulse and often involved both active and passive resistance to school, district, and state systems and policies that serve as systems of oppression.
2. The intersectional identities of teachers affect how they enact teacher leadership. Since power is multidirectional, teachers are in a constant state of negotiating power. The raced, classed, gendered, and heteronormed aspects of their identities likely impact both the methods they choose to use to negotiate power and the level of success that they may experience with various methods.
3. The gendered space of teaching affects how teachers enact leadership. All teachers, and specifically woman teachers, face gendered expectations about their work. Negotiating power in such a landscape also impacts which strategies will be chosen and the level of success of those strategies.

Teacher Leadership Definition

I developed an operational definition of teacher leadership to guide the research. This definition was adapted from the definition York-Barr and Duke (2004) synthesized from their literature review. Their definition was the most widely cited and used within the current body of literature. It also provided both a holistic understanding of the diverse nature of teacher leadership activities and the conceptual separation of teacher leadership from *teaching* (interacting with students instead of adults) and from *administration* (having positional authority). This conceptual separation is reflected in the literature and is needed in order to effectively address my research questions.

Throughout my research this definition is used:

Teacher leadership is the process of working toward improved student outcomes, school function, and educational practice (at the school level, district level, and/or the larger field of education) through leading colleagues in formal or informal leadership roles with a focus on instructional practice, the mobilization of teacher expertise, organizational efforts, and/or effective gathering and use of resources.

- Teacher leaders may be classroom teachers or have positions without classroom responsibilities. However, they are not administrators.
- Teacher leaders may have formal leadership roles but those roles have limited positional authority.
- Teacher leadership extends beyond an individual classroom and must involve the leading of colleagues.

Feminist Theory

The research presented here is grounded in a variety of feminisms, specifically those informed by postmodernism, poststructuralism, critical theory, and Black feminist thought. The notion that “knowledge and truth are partial, situated, subjective, power imbued, and relational” underlies feminist objectivity (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 9). The

influence of critical theory can be seen in the desire “to expose dominant power relationships and knowledge that oppresses with the goals of ‘critical emancipation’” which is congruent with the feminist emphasis on social change and social justice (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 11). However, feminism also accepts a more postmodern and poststructuralist understanding of power as “complex and unstable” and the possibilities of “agency, resistance, ‘freedom,’ and emancipation as contingent and limited” (Gannon & Davies, 2007, p. 73).

Feminist theory is particularly interested in using the tools of deconstruction to break down binary categories as binaries “are implicated in relations of power and in maintaining the status quo” (Gannon & Davies, 2007, p. 73). Black feminist scholars have articulated the concept of *intersectionality* in response to the privilege of the experience of White women within feminist scholarship. Intersectionality considers the impact of overlapping aspects of multiple categories of oppression and asserts that “people live multiple, layered identities and can simultaneously experience oppression and privilege” (Dill, McLaughlin, & Nieves, 2007, p. 629).

Chapter Summary

The gap between the literature on teacher leadership and my lived experience as a teacher leader led me to look critically at the body of literature and the conception of teacher leadership. The body of literature as a whole has failed to address how the feminized nature of the teaching profession, the intersectional identities of teachers, the “multidimensional and multidirectional nature of power”, and the impulse for social justice impact the practice of teacher leadership (Fuller, 2013, p. 3). Various conceptions

of teacher leadership often reflect various paradigms and policy agendas more so than the actual practice of teacher leaders. Teacher leadership has rarely been examined as a feminist practice. Tensions exist between various conceptions of teacher leadership and its role within hierarchical and patriarchal school structures. The study aims to investigate teacher leadership within this context.

In Chapter II, I critically examine bodies of literature related to the gendered space of teaching, teacher leadership, women in educational leadership, and teachers as social justice workers. Next, I describe the theoretical frameworks found within this literature and the collaborative autoethnographic methods used in this study. Then, findings are presented in conjunction with data analysis and interpretation and, finally, I explore the conclusions and recommendations that arise from the data presented here.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher leadership has grown dramatically as an area of interest. An ERIC descriptor search for *teacher leadership* yields only 19 results from 1979 to 1994, 317 results for the period 1995–2005, but 629 results from 2006 to 2014. The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) produced a report in 2010 laying the groundwork for a possible certification program for teacher leadership (Jackson, Burrus, Bassett, & Roberts, 2010). Several states, including North Carolina, now include aspects of teacher leadership in their teacher evaluation instruments (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2009).

Current policy reports on the topic are available from such diverse ends of the policy spectrum as The Institute for Educational Leadership (2008), The Center for Teacher Quality (Berry, Daughtrey, & Wieder, 2010), and the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (Dale, 2011). The journal *Professional Development in Education* devoted its entire April 2012 issue to the topic. In addition to the scholarly body of literature, there are a large number of trade books on the subject with varying levels of scholarly merit. There is a clear battle amongst various paradigms to define and codify the concept and promote the practice of teacher leadership as so defined.

My research questions required approaching several bodies of literature with a critical lens and integrating some important themes from each. Specifically, I considered

the literature in terms of the intersectional identity of teachers, the feminized nature of teacher work, the complex nature of power, and connections to the work of social justice—all issues that seemed to be missing in the scholarly conception of teacher leadership. In addition to the literature on teacher leadership, I have examined bodies of literature on gender in the work of teaching, women’s approaches to educational leadership, and teachers as social justice workers. I paid particular attention to the small body of emerging literature that examines the intersections of these areas. In this chapter, I explore how the historical context of teaching has shaped the practice of teacher leadership and the evolution of teacher leadership as a policy movement. In gathering insight to approach the research questions, I also examined the existing insight into how women teachers enact leadership and engage in the work of social justice in context of their intersectional identity.

The Feminine Gendered Space of Teaching

Gendered in this context refers to the “culturally specific and changeable definitions of masculine and feminine” (Acker, 1995, p. 114). Teaching is often described as a feminized profession. Within the literature, this can refer to the fact that teaching is a profession predominately populated with women, that female teachers are expected to perform a certain feminine and heterosexual expression of gender, and/or that the work of teaching itself is gendered as feminine—the work of caring and nurturing. Teaching became women’s work as a combination of cost savings, the sense of women as guardians of virtue and purity, and the congruence between women’s perceived biological tendencies to nurture with the work of teaching. Scholars have problematized

this narrative by highlighting the various interactions of these and other factors. Boyle (2004) provides an excellent survey of scholarship on the issue.

Teaching was considered a low status profession even before it was populated by women. However, this low status made it an acceptable profession for women. Women dominating the profession would ensure that it continued to remain low status. The percentage of women as teachers has fluctuated over time. Feminization happened at different rates in urban and rural areas, in Southern states versus Northern states, in segregated educational settings, in primary and secondary education, and in different countries (Acker, 1995; Boyle, 2004; Lortie, 1975). On the Australian frontier, instead of hiring women teachers to save on labor costs, married men were hired as teachers with the expectation that the school would also benefit from the free labor of their spouses (Acker, 1995). Meiners (2002) also highlights the fact that in many locations White women were often used as teachers as a civilizing and colonizing force upon native populations in the tradition of the “Lady Bountiful” ideal of benevolent women.

Despite fluctuations, in the U.S. the teaching force has been dominated by women since 1900. One interpretation of the historical record is simple—women moved into teaching when men had better job opportunities available. At the same time, there were active efforts by reformers such as Horace Mann and Catharine Beecher at various points in time to move women into the teaching field. Some saw women in teaching as a women’s rights issue—opening up jobs and educational opportunities for women. Others considered the administrative advantages of cheaper female labor and the passive nature of women that would allow for the expansion and increased efficiency of schooling. Still

others saw the value of female teachers because of their “natural” role as nurturers and their moral superiority (Acker, 1995; Boyle, 2004; Lortie, 1975).

However, women still chose to enter the teaching profession after more and better career opportunities were available to them. Galman’s (2012) research suggests that many middle class White women enter the teaching profession today because of its alignment with their valued feminine norms. It is possible that this was a motivating factor for some women in the past as well. Other researchers have documented that many women of color both past and present have been drawn to the teaching profession with the desire to engage in social justice work and contribute to racial uplift (Colomer, 2014; Flores, 2011; Johnson et al., 2014; MacDonald, 2004).

Impact of the Feminization of Teaching

The profession of teaching is shaped by its historic legacy. As Grumet (1988) explains,

The contradictions that evolved in the nineteenth century between the doctrine of maternal love and the practice of a harsh and regiment authority, between women’s dominance in numbers and our exclusion from leadership, between the overwhelming presence of the women in classrooms and the continuing identification of men as the only person with the capacity to know, are still present in the culture of schooling. (p. 45)

Today there still exists a cultural norm that teachers are to be altruistic, selfless, and caring—the picture of martyrdom and mothering (Galman, 2012). Galman (2012) also finds evidence that White women entering elementary teaching value feminine norms of compliance, conformity, passivity, and avoidance of politics. The conflation of the work of teaching with a perceived biological aptitude for care means that teaching is seen as

“primarily instinctive female knowledge” (Galman, 2012, p. 12). Hence teaching is seen as a low status, semi-profession requiring little training and few specialized skills.

Teacher leadership is among the many movements intended to solve this problem of perceived low status, lack of skilled knowledge, and lack of access to hegemonically masculine positions of power for teachers.

Acker’s review of research from 1995 seems to be the only attempt at a comprehensive literature review on the topic of gender and teachers’ work. She highlights that some scholars such as Michael Apple have placed the deprofessionalization of teaching in the context of a Marxist understanding of capitalism and a wider “proletarianization” of occupations and “intensification” of labor—extracting more labor in the same amount of time. These discussions touch on the issue of teaching as a feminized profession but fail to fully integrate the role of gender into the analysis. In fact, Acker (1995) found that as a whole, the body of literature on teachers’ work “has not taken on board the challenge posed by feminist studies of teaching as women’s work or questions of diversity among teachers” (p. 113). She highlights the complexities of teachers’ identities and influences and the dangers of essentialism when discussing gender:

Teachers’ perspectives are influenced by colleagues in the workplace and by family and community networks. They are shaped by the occupational culture and ideologies of teaching and the architecture and furnishings of schools and classrooms. Their work reflects the societal expectations that they will play a part in the complex processes of credentializing and motivating that reproduce power and privilege and the division of labor, including gendered labor, in a given society. Cultural beliefs about what is appropriate work for males and females—or more generally, the patriarchal patterns in society—provides a backdrop for everything teachers do. (Acker, 1995, p. 116)

Acker (1995) also problematizes the issue of caring in the literature: “the place of caring in teachers’ work remains deeply contradictory, simultaneously the moral high ground of the teaching task and a prime site of women’s oppression” (p. 124). Many scholars seem to assume that women’s inclination towards care is at least partially innate and fail to critically consider the role of socialization. Some scholars have argued that any disposition to care is no more than a survival strategy in response to women’s subordinate position. Others have found variation in the expression of care and mothering across race and class (Acker, 1995).

More recent authors have brought additional critical analysis to the feminized aspects of teaching. Galman (2012) describes the conversation about the gendered nature of teaching and its semiprofessional status as “an increasingly crusty, problematic, and unfulfilling one, dominated by pundits despite the conclusions drawn by excellent scholarship” (p. xvii). It is important to consider the intersection of the raced and classed aspects as well as the gendered aspects of teaching (Galman, 2012; Galman & Mallozzi 2012; Griffiths, 2006). Galman’s (2012) insightful study looked at the intersection of pre-service teachers and girl culture—heterosexual, feminine, constructing the self as object, engaging in diligent appearance/impression management, etc. She found that White, middle-class young women entered elementary teaching because the career seems compatible with their valued White, middle-class, Western, feminine norms. In fact, Galman’s subjects rated “niceness,” “goodness,” and “attractiveness” as the most important indicators of a “good teacher.” Research would suggest that many women of color, on the other hand, approach teaching with more overt political and cultural intent

(Colomer, 2014; Flores, 2011; Johnson et al., 2014). This highlights the complexities of intersectional identity within the feminized context of teaching.

Teacher Leadership

In tracing the roots of teacher leadership, several scholars point to John Dewey and his writing from 1903 (Herzog & Abernathy, 2011; Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2011). Dewey's calls for a "deeper and more authentic involvement of teachers in making school policies and practices" were based both on arguments for democracy and on the practical value of teacher knowledge (Herzog & Abernathy, 2011, p. 188). While Dewey's writings inform our understanding of teacher leadership, it was the actions of many women teachers at the turn of the century that both clarify its ideological grounding and demonstrate its practice (Rousmarie, 2005; Sadovnik & Semel, 2002). Ironically, the movement toward teacher leadership was made necessary by the development of the professional school administrator role along with centralized control of schools as an application of scientific management principles (Smylie et al., 2011).

Historical Teacher Leadership Practice

For decades, teachers had much autonomy and independence in their work. Well into the 20th century, many rural schools continued the tradition of the one-room schoolhouse with no more than a handful of teachers working at a school (sometimes with one *principal teacher*) and loose oversight from school boards and/or a single district school superintendent (Lortie, 1975). In many more rural areas, county school superintendents were elected and frequently women held the positions. In 1900, 10% of

local superintendents were women and by 1910, 24 states had granted women the right to vote in school elections (Blount, 2002; Rousmaniere, 2005).

The confluence of overall population and immigration growth, the rise of urban residency patterns, the development of common schools, restrictions on child labor, and mandatory attendance policies all led urban centers (and eventually all but the most remote and rural areas) to develop complex hierarchical and bureaucratic systems to manage the logistics of school districts. This is the same point in time when historical data shows that the profession of teaching had been dramatically feminized. The development of these school structures reflected both hegemonic patterns of the larger society as well as desired scientific management principles. The shift from the work of *educating* children to *managing* a business-like school or district gendered the role of school administration masculine and ensured that women teachers remained in a subordinate role to White, male administrators and school board members (Boyle, 2004; Rousmaniere, 2005).

During the early 20th century, some progressive minded women teachers rejected both the factory model of education and the hierarchical system that locked them out of leadership. White women such as Marietta Johnson, Margaret Naumbury, Caroline Pratt, Helen Parkhurst, Elsie Ripley Clapp, Carmelita Chase Hinton, and Flora J. Cooke all founded their own private schools (Sadovnik & Semel, 2002). Several Black women teachers including Lucy Craft Laney, Charlotte Hawkins Brown, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Nannie Helen Borroughs also founded schools, though their impetus was less progressive reform and more a response to the poor conditions of segregated schools or

the racism of white educators in integrated schools (Johnson et al., 2014; Sadovnik & Semel, 2002). In the American Southwest, Spanish-speaking communities had already turned to the Catholic Church and teaching orders of nuns as an alternative to segregated schools, segregated classes, assimilation methods, and/or English only instruction (MacDonald, 2004).

These women engaged in a wide range of leadership practices but almost always embraced positional authority in leading their schools. Of course, these are only the women whose life and work have been studied by scholars. There are likely others whose stories have yet to be told. While not necessarily models of non-positional teacher leadership, they do demonstrate a history of teachers as activists and social justice workers and represent an alternative genesis of teacher leadership. In terms of the development of teacher leadership in its modern conception, we can look to the well-documented example of Chicago Public Schools around the turn of the 20th century. While other urban areas have their own unique histories, teachers still faced similar challenges, issues, debates, and tensions and used many of the same strategies to tackle them.

Catherine Goggins, Margaret Haley, and the CTA. Insight into historical teacher leaders in Chicago is in large part due to the quality scholarship of Kate Rousmaniere (2002, 2005). In 1892 Arvilla DeLuce, a Chicago public school teacher, started a campaign to establish pensions for teachers. She had spent the two previous years drafting language for a bill and creating a detailed plan of action. Together with another teacher, Catherine Goggin, they identified a teacher at each Chicago school who

would be successful at getting petition signatures. The two teachers presented their proposal and thousands of signatures to the governor and in 1895 the state legislature passed teacher pensions into law. In 1897, when the new law was threatened, a group of elementary teachers met and established the Chicago Teachers' Federation (CTF) to advocate for the pension law and address other issues of concern to the city's elementary teachers. Within six months, over half of the elementary teachers in the district had joined. Catherine Goggins was elected as one of the group's leaders. Though the CTF did not limit male members, at the time only 5% of Chicago's teachers were men and over half of those taught at the high school level, meaning that CTF membership was almost exclusively women (Rousmaniere, 2005).

Goggins had attended public school herself in the district at well-supported schools. However, as a teacher she taught in Chicago's First Ward, which had the highest percentage of Black and Chinese students in the district. Her school had the lowest attendance rate in the district. Her partner in leadership of the CTF, Margaret Haley, spent 16 years teaching poor immigrant children in Chicago's Packingtown neighborhood within smelling range of the stockyards and meatpacking plants. Many of her students were Eastern European immigrants who did not speak English. Both teachers dealt daily with the horrors of urban poverty and its impact on children. Many of the CTF's leaders such as Anna Mary Murphy, Elizabeth Burhmann, Kate O'Conner, Anna Rockford, Florence Tennery, and Nano Hicky also taught in Chicago's south and west side schools in similar conditions (Rousmaniere, 2005).

The CTF under Haley's leadership fought to address inequities in school funding, tax codes that underfunded schools, capricious teacher evaluation systems, threats to tenure and pension policies, school board corruption, and insufficient teacher pay—and lobbied for women's suffrage. In 1902, the CTF affiliated with the Chicago Federation of Labor and became the first teachers' group to make a formal link with a union. The affiliation was driven in part by the fact that the women of the CTF did not have the right to vote and needed to ally with those who had greater political power. The affiliation with labor was sometimes straining on both sides and brought forth tensions that still exist today between those who support unionization and those who see it as counterproductive and professionalization as the better path to teacher rights (Rousmaniere, 2002, 2005).

In 1904, Haley gave an impassioned speech promoting unionization at the National Education Association (NEA) convention. Her opportunity to speak was a result of a campaign to wrestle control of the NEA from the male administrators and professors who maintained power. Women were previously not even allowed to speak from the floor of the convention—a rule that Haley had broken in 1901 to provide a blistering critique of the leadership. In her 1904 speech, she provided a carefully crafted argument that “unionization would join progressivism's democratic convictions to labor's democratic practices, and thus, fulfill education's responsibility to publicly uphold ‘the democratic ideal’” (Hlavacik, 2012, p. 505).

In her view, education was critical for the success of democracy, but democracy was critical for the success of public schools (Hlavacik, 2012). Aaron Grove, a male

school superintendent, followed with a speech as a sharp response to Haley. He argued that she relied on “a false conception of true democracy” (as cited in Rousmaniere, 2005, p. 112). Schools were already democratic, he reasoned, because elected school boards or mayors controlled them. He likened Haley’s approach to that of a greedy and selfish disrespectful daughter who did not know her place in her parents’ home (Hlavacik, 2012; Rousmaniere, 2005).

Haley routinely spoke against the “factoryizing” of schooling through the processes of scientific management. Her vision was the “model of schools as democratic workplaces where teachers’ professional authority and children’s natural interest drove the school day” (Rousmaniere, 2005, p. ix). She was deeply suspicious of the impact of unrestrained capitalizing on society and schools. One of Haley’s biggest concerns was the professionalization of teaching. She saw the move towards higher qualification standards and more required education for teachers as a move to exclude working class women from the teaching profession and limit community input in the schools. From 1880 to 1900, the percentage of Chicago’s elementary teachers from working class backgrounds dropped from one half to one third. She wanted schools to remain community schools where the teachers lived, worked, and had family ties in the communities they served (Rousmaniere, 2005).

Even though the CTF fought for those who were disadvantaged, it rarely crossed race or class barriers. Both Coggins and Haley were Irish Catholic women, as were one third of Chicago’s teaching force in 1900. The social barriers between the largely working class Irish Catholic CTF and Protestant middle-class women’s clubs, Black civic

organizations, and college educated high school teachers prevented the establishment of true coalitions despite their similar goals. Of the over 50 Black women's clubs in Chicago, there is only record of the Federation interacting with such a group. The CTF made little effort to recruit the few Black teachers who succeeded in securing positions in Chicago's integrated schools. The Federation often supported the racist stance of other labor unions when Black workers were brought in to replace striking White workers (Rousmaniere, 2002, 2005).

Ella Flag Young. Another woman teacher engaged in teacher leadership at the time was Ella Flagg Young. Young spent her career within the Chicago public schools and the University of Chicago. She completed her dissertation under the direction of John Dewey then became his colleague—he credited her with much influence on him. She was tapped to lead the Chicago Normal School in 1905 and in 1909 became the first woman appointed as Superintendent of Chicago Public Schools (and the highest paid woman in the country at the time) (Blount, 2002). In 1910, she became the first woman elected to the presidency of the NEA, a coup made possible in part by Margaret Haley's strategic moves within the organization (Webb & McCarthy, 1998).

In her various leadership positions, she put into practice the democratic ideals she spelled out in her published dissertation *Isolation in the Schools*. Most notable of these was the institution of teacher councils that allowed Chicago teachers to collectively make decisions about curriculum and working conditions. As she explained in *Isolation in the Schools*, teachers needed the freedom and real power to engage in their own creative process and execution of ideas in order to access their natural intelligence and maintain

their humanity and a sense of purpose. They needed the time and space to engage in both the theoretical and curricular decisions driving the school as well as the more logistical choices (Blount, 2002).

To prove that some cannot teach unless they possess freedom is not enough; it must be predicated that freedom belongs to that form of activity which characterizes the teacher. The schools will be purged of the uncultured, non-progressive element, the fetters that bind the thoughtful and progressive will be stricken off, when the work is based on an intelligent understanding of the truth that freedom is an essential of that form of activity known as the teacher. (Young, 1901, pp. 33–34)

Beyond the teacher, Young believed that parents, students, and the community at large must also participate in wise, democratic school governance. As Blount (2002) explains:

Not surprisingly, few other administrators of her time shared her vision of how schools should work. For one thing, they would have needed to come to terms with relinquishing some of their power, which most believed was meager enough. It would have required that the mostly male ranks of school administrators to work much more closely with a primarily female cadre of teachers. Because men typically earned and maintained their sense of manhood through their association with other men, and because the masculinity of male workers in a supposedly “woman’s profession” was suspect already, this prospect may have been horrifying. (p. 172)

At the Chicago Normal School, Young broke down social barriers between various departments and fostered collaboration among the staff. As superintendent, she maintained an open door policy for all teachers, decentralized some aspects of district governance, and instituted representative teacher councils to advise and guide the work of schools and the larger district (Smith, 1976). The stated purpose of the councils was described as giving

full and free expression or voice to the different attitudes and judgments of the teaching force on questions pertaining to courses of study, textbooks, departmental work, duties, and advancement of teachers and the general study of educational questions by the entire public school teaching corps, and to enable the superintendent to become conversant at first hand with these attitudes and judgments. (Webb & McCarthy, 1998, p. 227)

The historical record shows that Young “never failed to encourage constructive, independent thought among her subordinates” (Bashaw, 1986, p. 365).

Fannie Richards and other teachers of color. Despite their class distinctions, these stories are those of White women teachers. Teachers of color in the same time frame faced very different challenges. Generally, they could only secure teaching jobs in segregated settings. Those who were employed in integrated schools were often the only teacher of color in the school. In segregated environments, while most or all of the teachers and possibly the principal would also be a person of color, all district officials and school board members were White. In these contexts, teacher leadership was necessarily more secretive and subversive.

While scholarship on historic Black women teachers is sparse, Williams (2014) has documented the story of Fannie Richards. Richards was the first Black teacher hired by Detroit Public Schools in 1865. When schools were desegregated four years later, she moved to an integrated school where she taught children of different races and classes for the next 44 years. Upon her retirement in 1915, Richards was one of only three Black teachers out of 3,000 in Detroit Public Schools. An interview at the time of her retirement leaves the impression that she felt she worked collaboratively and equally with her White colleagues, though history has not preserved any more nuanced understanding

of her experiences. Throughout her career she was active in civic organizations including Black women's clubs, the Second Baptist Church, the Phyllis Wheatly Home, and the Michigan State Association of Colored Women. In 1913, the Governor of Michigan appointed her to the Negro National Education Congress.

Teachers of color working in segregated environments often engaged the entire community in the task of racial uplift. In the Southwest, some bilingual teachers secretly broke rules requiring English only instruction. In New Mexico, where Spanish-speakers had more political clout, the first bilingual normal school in the U.S. was established in 1909. By 1918, it had graduated over 100 new teachers (MacDonald, 2004). In the segregated South, Black women teachers risked life and livelihood by secretly teaching adults to read; educating community members about voting rights, the structure of U.S. government, and preparing them for poll tests; and instilling a sense of Black identity and dignity within students. Class distinctions between middle-class Black teachers and poor Black students and cultural gaps between urban and rural or Northern and Southern teachers and communities often impacted the leadership of Black women teachers. Some teachers also subscribed to the idea that racial uplift was not appropriate for all students, but only for those who were the most worthy and could truly serve to counter notions of White supremacy (Johnson et al., 2014).

Summary. In considering the early development of the underlying ideological framework of teacher leadership and its practices, what is most interesting is how little has changed in over 100 years of modern public schooling. Educators and schools today are still fighting similar battles against similar enemies. The roots of modern teacher

leadership are aligned with progressive ideals of democratic education and with social justice intent for underprivileged students and communities. Teacher leadership in many ways was born out of the disenfranchisement of women teachers in an increasingly patriarchal and hierarchical system. Teacher leadership practices of coalition building, networking, lobbying, scholarship, public appeals, building trust in communities, and even underhanded political maneuvers have been in practice for a well over a century.

The Modern Policy Movement in Teacher Leadership

In the late 1980s, teacher leadership was reborn as a modern reform movement and topic of study for scholars (Smylie et al., 2011). The first wave of teacher leadership literature focused on teachers in pseudo-administrative roles with limited positional authority. The second wave focused more on instructional practice, yet still studied only teachers in formal leadership positions (Pounder, 2006). It was in the mid-2000s that scholars began to question this narrow focus on formal and hierarchical teacher leadership positions. At this time, the teacher leadership movement was also responding to the new pressure of the accountability movement and high stakes testing. The lack of clear evidence that teacher leadership could be tied to improved student outcomes was problematic. While this fact could be attributed to the lack of clarity of the definition of teacher leadership, poor research design, the complexities of the variables involved, and the small number of studies, the teacher leadership movement still needed to redefine and reposition itself to be successful in this new environment (Pounder, 2006; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Several scholars have pointed out the seeming incompatibility of the two reform movements—teacher empowerment versus teacher accountability (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008; Pounder, 2006). In response to this, scholars began to define teacher leadership explicitly in terms of student outcomes. Scholars also began to consider informal teacher leadership and more collective, task-oriented, and organizational approaches to teacher leadership. Teacher leadership began to be positioned in theoretical frameworks of distributed and transformational leadership (Pounder, 2006; Smylie et al., 2011; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). It appears the goal was to connect teacher leadership to broader aspects of school effectiveness that can be more directly tied to higher achievement.

Defining teacher leadership. Strangely, despite the large body of literature, no one definition of teacher leadership has emerged. In the most extensive review of research so far produced, York-Barr and Duke (2004) settled on this definition:

mobilizing teacher experience about teaching and learning to improve the culture and instruction in schools such that student learning is enhanced . . . [it] involves leading among colleagues with a focus on instructional practice as well as working at the organizational level. (p. 261)

Working towards a possible assessment for teacher leadership, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) included a full-page summary of differing definitions based on the research (Jackson et al., 2010):

- Teachers become leaders when they function efficiently in professional learning communities to impact student learning, contribute to school improvement, inspire excellence in practice, and empower stakeholders to participate in educational improvement (Childs-Bowen, Moller, & Scrivner, 2000).

- Teacher leadership facilitates principled action to foster whole-school success. Teacher leaders transform teaching and learning and tie the school and community together, and advance the community's social mission and quality of life (Crowther, Kaagen, Ferguson, & Hann, 2002).
- Teacher leadership is a set of skills demonstrated by teachers who are able to influence students outside of the classroom and beyond (Danielson, 2006).
- Teacher leadership encompasses the inter-related domains of commitment and knowledge. Thus, there is a commitment to moral purpose, continuous learning, and knowledge of learning processes, as well as an understanding of the educational context and change processes (Fullan 1994).
- Teacher leadership is a mobilization of the available attributes of teachers to strengthen student performance at the ground level. Teacher leaders work toward collaboration and shared leadership in the daily activities in the school (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001).
- Teacher leaders lead within and outside of the classroom. A teacher leader is a member and contributor to a community of teacher learners. They are influential in the continued improvement of educational practice (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001).
- Teacher leaders hold influence outside of the classroom and are autonomous in their own work. Still, they do not engage in managerial or supervisory tasks (Murphy, 2005).
- Teacher leaders have the ability to encourage other teachers and colleagues to change and begin to think about taking part in things they ordinarily would not consider (Wasley, 1991).
- Teacher leadership is an idea that emphasizes that teachers hold an important and central position within the schools (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). (p. 2)

Synthesizing the research on the topic, York-Barr and Duke (2004) found these reoccurring characteristics of teacher leaders:

- are experienced and knowledgeable in terms of teaching and curriculum (and are respected and valued by colleagues for this)
- have a well-developed personal philosophy of education
- are creative
- are willing to take risks and seek challenges
- take responsibility for their actions

- are sensitive and receptive to the thoughts and feelings of others
- have a strong work ethic and organizational skills
- build trust and rapport with colleagues
- are effective communicators
- handle conflict with good negotiating and mediating skills
- are seen as supportive
- can grasp “big picture” ideas

York-Barr and Duke (2004) also found that the body of literature described teacher leaders as engaging in:

- management tasks,
- developing curriculum,
- mentoring and providing professional development,
- participating in research,
- confronting barriers and critically examining current practices,
- creating partnerships with the community,
- becoming politically involved, and
- working with teacher education programs.

Despite this holistic picture of teacher leadership, an overwhelming majority of the literature on the topic focuses on the collaborative, supportive, and sensitive aspects of teacher leadership and shies away from discussions of political action, critical inquiry, challenging authority, and conflict management. The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards exploring the definition of teacher leadership for the purpose of a

possible certification program. In a 2010 report, they highlighted these aspects of teachers' leadership: "engaging, inspiring, and motivating others," demonstrating "optimism, enthusiasm, and confidence," having a "positive affect," and being "relatively altruistic" with only one brief mention of conflict resolution (Jackson et al., 2010, pp. 8–9). It is clear that what was being valued is a more passive, supportive, and perhaps even *feminine* definition of teacher leadership.

Teacher leadership standards. In my effort to understand how teacher leadership was being defined, I had intended to include in my research a careful review of each of the 21 graduate level programs in teacher leadership identified by Leonard et al. in 2012 (and any established since). However, it was clear from my initial review of these programs that they varied widely in terms of scope, focus, quality, ideology, and definitions of teacher leadership. It appeared that policy work in teacher leadership and scholarship from the field of administrative leadership was shaping the study of teacher leadership, not the other way around. As a result, I shifted my focus to study the important policy documents related to teacher leadership.

Within the policy realm, much work is being done to develop teacher leadership competencies or standards that are, in turn, shaping university programs of study. Standards developed by Danielson in 2007 have been adopted for use in teacher evaluations in a large number of states. These standards emphasize relationships with colleagues, service to the school, participation in school and district projects, service to the profession, advocacy, and compliance with school and district regulations

(Hunzicker, 2013). The Teacher Evaluation Standards for North Carolina, influenced by Danielson's work, include expectations in Standard I related to teacher leadership:

Teachers work collaboratively with school personnel to create a professional learning community. They analyze and use local, state, and national data to develop goals and strategies in the school improvement plan that enhance student learning and teacher working conditions. Teachers provide input in determining the school budget and in the selection of professional development that meets the needs of students and their own professional growth. They participate in the hiring process and collaborate with their colleagues to mentor and support teachers to improve the effectiveness of their departments or grade levels . . . Teachers strive to improve the teaching profession. They contribute to the establishment of positive working conditions in their school. They actively participate and advocate for decision-making structures in education and government that take advantage of the expertise of teachers. Teachers promote professional growth for all educators and collaborate with their colleagues to improve the profession. (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2009, p. 6)

While holding teachers accountable for enacting leadership, these standards do not address how teachers are to hold school and district administrators accountable for creating conditions that allow teachers to enact this form of leadership. Standards such as these create the dichotomy whereby teachers can be denied power to enact leadership and then also punished for failing to do so. Ironically, if teachers do succeed in enacting teacher leadership in the form of political action, they often find themselves facing political retribution from the very policymakers who enacted these standards.

A partnership with the Center for Teaching Quality, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and the National Education Association (2014) produced a document titled *Teacher Leadership Competencies*. This document also builds on *The Teacher Leader Model Standards* published in 2011 by The Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium. Reflecting the concerns of the parties involved in

their development, these two sets of standards put a greater emphasis on the role of teacher leaders in education policy and advocating for students and the profession. The *Teacher Leader Model Standards* also reflect strong focus on global competitiveness, the use of student data and testing, and a collaborative relationship between teacher leaders and principals.

The *Teacher Leadership Competencies* (Center for Teaching Quality et al., 2014) highlight the need for competency in the realms of reflective practice, personal effectiveness, interpersonal effectiveness, communication, continuing learning and education, group processes, adult learning, and technological facility. The *Teacher Leader Model Standards* (The Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011) define skill in the domains of:

- fostering a collaborative culture to support education development and student learning,
- accessing and using research to improve practice and student learning,
- promoting professional learning for continuous improvement,
- facilitating improvements in instruction and student learning,
- promoting the use of assessments and data for school and district improvement,
- improving outreach and collaboration with families and communities, and
- advocating for student learning and the profession.

It is notable that the *Teacher Leadership Competencies* includes these statements highlighting the teacher leader's role as a selfless nurturer and supporter: "those who lead

do so not just for self-development and self-actualization; they are committed to helping others achieve their potential” and “teacher leaders possess a genuine caring for their colleagues” (Center for Teaching Quality et al., 2014, p. 8). Both the *Teacher Leadership Competencies* and the *Teacher Leader Model Standards* place an explicit focus on issues of diversity and cultural competence with students, colleagues, and families. *The Teacher Leadership Competencies* go further to directly address social justice issues including these high level competencies: “successfully navigates communication with diverse and sometimes adversarial power structures” and “makes a concerted effort to reach out to disenfranchised and/or disengaged populations . . . engendering in them a spirit of community and sense of belonging in various educational contexts” (Center for Teaching Quality et al., 2014, pp. 11–14).

Critical concerns in teacher leadership research. The field of teacher leadership has yet to establish theoretical frameworks to ground research. Much of the body of literature is devoted to describing the benefits of teacher leadership, describing its practice, exploring how teachers develop as leaders, and examining the conditions that encourage or discourage teacher leadership (Hilty, 2011; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Often listed as benefits for teacher leaders are personal growth and a sense of professional accomplishment in an otherwise flat profession. There is often a patronizing tone to this discussion with teacher leadership positioned as freeing teachers from the drudgery of the classroom and educational myopia (Reason & Reason, 2011; Zepeda, Mayers, & Benson, 2003) or as Barth (2011) puts it in an essay originally published in 2001:

The teacher who leads . . . gets to sit at the table with grown-ups as a first-class citizen in the school house rather than remain the subordinate in a world full of superordinates [and] enjoys variety, even relief from the often relentless tedium of the classroom. (p. 25)

Though the teacher leadership movement was born out of a desire to solve the problem of the deprofessionalization of teaching, only a few authors note the fact that this problem is in part a result of the feminization of the teaching profession (Collay, 2011; Hilty, 2011; Taylor, 2009). Some have criticized the teacher leadership movement as no more than a distraction—tying teachers up with administrative decisions and giving them the illusion of power while they actually lost more autonomy in the classroom. Such bureaucratic drowning of teachers serves the forces of hegemony by preventing teachers from engaging in the work of teaching for social justice. As Martin (2011b) explains,

If teachers do not receive recognition for their hard work, if this expectation falls more on one group of teachers (e.g., women teachers), and/or they are not being properly compensated (either monetarily or through flex time) for their extra work, then we are just placing undue pressure on already over-worked teachers. (p. 107)

Teacher leadership roles could be seen as simply adding more rungs to the hierarchical ladder and more layers of bureaucracy—the distribution of leadership does not necessarily mean the distribution of power as well (Lumby, 2013; Murphy, 2005; Smylie et al., 2011). Hilty (2011) points out that in the harem-like structure of schools, teacher leadership can simply be seen as a way to free administrators from mundane tasks. In fact, it is easy to find resources on teacher leadership written for administrators to help them contain, control, and direct teacher leadership for just such desirable ends

(see Blase & Blase, 2001; Moller & Pankake, 2006). As for the body of research itself, it has been pointed out that the literature fails to address social justice concerns or directly include teacher voices (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008; Murphy, 2005). Collay expressed this concern in 2006:

Much of the literature on teacher leadership, shared or distributed leadership, and the role of teacher leadership in professional learning community development is written by and for positional leaders or those who study positional leadership . . . [and] in spite of constant discussion about and recommendations for collaboration . . . reflect our internalized acceptance of leadership and followership.

Reviewing literature published since those criticisms were made, it would seem that these concerns have yet to be fully addressed, though books by Lieberman and Friedrich (2010) and Collay (2011) are notable exceptions.

Women in Educational Leadership

Some scholars have focused on women in educational leadership roles. In general, researchers have cited statistics highlighting the lack of women in formal educational leadership roles, critiqued the absence of women's voices and feminist approaches in the larger body of educational leadership literature, researched the possible causes of their absence and provided suggestions on how to increase the number of women in educational leadership, analyzed how women's leadership styles differ from men's, and provided profiles of female educational leaders (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Fuller, 2013; Martin, 2011a). This body of literature focuses almost exclusively on school administration (i.e., the roles of principal and superintendent). The formal nature

and traditionally masculine space of these roles complicates the transferability of this scholarship to the teacher leader context.

The body of literature itself is problematic with many findings that are borderline essentialist or binary in nature (or at least overgeneralized). A large majority of the research on women in educational leadership also is in the form of dissertation work. Completed by novice scholars and not widely published, the work has had little impact on the larger field (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Additionally, some of the theories of women's leadership "have been co-opted and repackaged, not as feminist theories, but as pared-down and simplified 'how-tos' of school improvement and leadership in general" without crediting the feminists origins of the theory (Martin, 2011a, p. 14). The literature is also virtually silent on the complexities of heteronormative/queered identity and its interconnectedness to performed femininities and masculinities (Martin, 2011a).

Some also argue that the body of literature has failed to be inclusive of the voices and experience of Black women in leadership (Alston, 2012; Grimes, 2005; Horsford, 2012; Robinson & Baber, 2013). Grimes (2005) theorizes that

Early in the African-American woman's socialization process, she is taught to value interdependence, mutual aid, spiritualism, reverence for elders, and the tendency to communicate indirectly. Conversely, the Eurocentric cultural perspective values individualism, competition, youth, and communication in direct terms. (n.p.)

A current synthesis of the body of literature produces some theories about women's leadership. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) have put forth a model of five ways women lead. The first is *relational leadership*. Given women's discomfort with

masculine conceptions of power, they have exercised power *with* instead of power *over* individuals. Power is conceived as growing, not diminishing, as it is shared and power is used to build relationships.

Women also practice *leadership for social justice*. “Women, more than men, identify educational careers as social justice work, even if they don’t use that explicit language” (p. 11). Social justice in this case is being defined loosely as “making a difference in the lives of students” (p. 13) and not explicitly in terms of working to address the systemic processes of privilege and oppression. Teachers fall along all parts of a continuum of understanding of how privilege and oppression at play in schools and the larger society and/or of their own privilege. It must be remembered that teachers are part of a system that often “helps” students from oppressed categories by perpetuating the myths of meritocracy and hegemonic ideals.

Research demonstrates that Black women in particular often approach educational leadership as a change agent with a passionate and precise understanding of social justice in opposition to systemic forces of oppression (Grimes, 2005; Robinson & Baber, 2013). Horsford (2012) describes Black women’s educational leadership as “bridge leadership” as she serves as “a bridge for others, to others, and between others in oppressive and discriminatory contexts over time” (p. 17). She describes this practice as:

A grass-roots leadership approach grounding democratic practice, community work, and social change to improve the lives of the disadvantaged and underserved. It requires the ability to traverse and negotiate difference, primarily race, gender, and class divides, by rethinking and restricting hierarchical, top-down configurations of leadership that fail to meet the needs of people *where* they are, and even worse, *who* they are. (p. 18)

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) also define women’s leadership as *spiritual*—as a source of hope and resilience found in religion, mindfulness, and/or self-understanding. Finally, women seek *balance* between work and home. Fuller (2013) further integrates into Grogan and Shakeshaft’s model an earlier model published by Blackmore (1989) that Fuller describes this way:

Its key elements include: a view of power as multidimensional and multidirectional, leadership practiced in different contexts by different people not merely equated to formal roles, leadership to empower rather than to control others, a relational view of morality in which moral practice is rational within given contexts and social and political relations and not according to moral laws or principles, and leadership concerned with communitarian and collective activities and values. (Fuller, 2013, pp. 3–4)

Considering the gendered nature of the work of teachers, it is not surprising that there are many parallels between these theories of feminist leadership and women’s leadership practice and the definitions and practices of teacher leadership.

Educational Leadership for Social Justice and Teachers as Cultural Workers

Socially just practices have been addressed in various theoretical realms including multicultural education, democratic education, critical race theory, critical pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy, postmodernism, feminisms, (dis)ability studies, postcolonialism, queer theory, antiracist education, anti-oppressive education, and bilingual education (North, 2008; Picower, 2012). Despite the distinctions and rich debates between various theoretical camps, *social justice* can generally be thought of as “disrupting and subverting arrangements that promote marginalization and exclusionary processes” (Theoharis, 2007, p. 223) or “simultaneously denouncing oppressive

structures and announcing more humane, democratic, and just possibilities” (Ritchie, 2012, p. 121).

There are two related bodies of literature that look at teachers as social justice workers and at leadership for social justice. In both cases, the literature is overwhelmingly theoretical or focused on the preparation of teachers or administrators; few studies focus on studying practicing educators. The two bodies are split along conceptual lines and the studies of teachers focused primarily on curriculum, instruction, pedagogy, and classroom practice, while studies of leadership focused almost exclusively on school and district administrators, neither of which fully addresses the context of teacher leadership.

This conceptual split can be seen another way as some scholars and practitioners only see social justice in terms of equitable policies, structures, and access to learning. Others see a need also for an equitable curriculum, and still others consider it necessary to directly develop student awareness of and agency toward social justice concerns. The division of literature into separate realms of managing and teaching denies the connection between socially just *schools*, socially just *learning*, and *education* as a liberatory practice. The literature is also often fragmented by a focus on specific underprivileged populations such as needs of immigrant students, building relationship in urban Black communities, greater integration of students with disabilities, etc., not a holistic understanding of the larger workings of power, oppression, and privilege or intersectionality (Capper & Young, 2014).

Leadership for social justice is addressed in theories such as servant leadership, critical leadership, feminist leadership, and various other transformational approaches to leadership. Critical leadership in particular:

. . . attends to the issues of social justice and social responsibility. It attempts to create and maintain equitable social relationships and practices for all members of the organization. A fundamental concern within the practice of critical leadership is for all members to collectively reflect on how well they are creating and maintaining a level playing field. Furthermore, a vision of organizational equity and social responsibility is fostered primarily through reflection and dialogue regarding the community's vision of its goals and ideals. (Neumann, Jones, & Webb, 2012, p. 8)

Schultz (2010) provides a framework that seems particularly applicable to teacher leadership in defining a scholar-practitioner with core values of community, democracy, social justice, an ethos of care, and equity. These conceptions of the practice of education and educational leadership for social justice have roots in the Progressive movement (including the work of scholars such as John Dewey and Carter Woodson), in the various movements for civil rights for oppressed peoples, postmodern philosophy, and the writings Paulo Freire (Blackmore, 2006; Horsford, 2012; North, 2008).

Capper and Young (2014) identified ironies shaping the current practice of and literature on social justice leadership. Despite the greater focus on equitable practice in schools, schools are actually more segregated by a variety of demographics and inclusion is not a primary focus of literature or practice. The literature focuses on specific groups of students and not issues of intersectionality. It is also not clear what role achievement, specifically as measured by standardized tests, should play in socially just educational practice. Testing is just one of the many uncoordinated mandates and initiatives that

shape an incoherence of policy and practice. In both literature and practice, social justice leadership is still being completed in a “superhero” fashion with not enough emphasis on truly collaborative and equitable leadership. It is within this context of ironies that a few studies have looked at the socially just practices of educators in the field.

Theoharis (2007) examined the practice of principals who expressed strong social justice commitments. Several themes emerged to describe their socially just practices.

These include: raising the achievement of disadvantaged students (with half of the principals taking an uncritical stance towards standardized test measures), building staff understanding and capacity related to social justice issues, and connecting to marginalized communities with a school culture that was welcoming and accessible.

Wasonga (2009) looked at the socially just practices of 32 principals. They engaged in shared decision-making (the most commonly reported practice), advocacy (often enacted by considering student issues on a case by case basis), relationship building with stakeholders, and exercising social control with purpose (focusing on what was “best for kids” and ignoring the perspectives of stakeholders that were perceived to have other agendas).

The study highlights the deep skepticism that the principals had of the motives of some stakeholders and of the potential of schools to function democratically. So deep was this skepticism and so high the confidence in their interpretation of what was “best for students,” the principals sometimes eliminated groups of stakeholders from decision-making entirely, while maintaining that they valued and used shared decision-making in their schools. Wasonga (2009) contends, “because the principals believed that what is in

the best interest of all students is not always the focus of a democratic community . . . justice [could] come only through the use of moral power or control” (p. 221).

Nolan and Palazzolo (2011) studied 330 teachers in their first three years teaching at suburban schools. The teachers overwhelmingly expressed strong desires to engage in and noted the importance of teacher leadership through advocacy for students around social justice issues. However, they also expressed hesitation and fear to engage in such work without tenure protections and some felt inadequately prepared to do so. Picower (2012) looked at the practices of nine “teacher activists” and found that their work was founded on three clear commitments:

- reconciling a vision of a socially just world with the world around them while understanding that education could be simultaneously oppressive and liberatory,
- engaging in liberatory practices in their classrooms, and
- engaging in ongoing collective action against the oppressive structures of schooling.

These practices highlight that the teachers engaged in social justice work in both leadership activities and classroom instruction.

A few themes emerge from this small body of literature on the practices of educators working for social justice. These include the importance of building relationships (Shields, 2004; Wasonga, 2009) and networks of likeminded educators (Affolter & Hoffman, 2011; Neumann et al., 2012; Ritchie, 2012; Theoharis, 2007). Resisting oppressive forces is repeatedly described as exhausting and isolating. In

addition to both healthy and unhealthy coping strategies, teachers and administrators both describe the use of formal or informal networks for “incubating and sustaining” this work (Ritchie, 2012). One variety of formal groups is known as a teacher activist group (TAG). Several scholars have used similar language in defining teachers leading for social justice not as leadership but as “teacher activism” or teachers as “change agents” (Collay, 2006; Lukacs & Galluzzo, 2014; Picower, 2012).

Teacher activism is defined in this case as “educators who work for social justice both inside and outside of their classrooms” (Picower, 2012, p. 562) and “equity focused advocacy, where teachers stand up against policies and procedures that contradict their values” (Collay, 2006, p. 140). Luckacs and Galluzzo (2014) conceptualize teachers as change agents initiating school reform. They consider “teachers as changes agents” a more evolved form of teacher leadership than the prevailing model of teachers as implementing or guiding school reform. They define teacher change agents as able to “read their school environments,” to garner the “participation of their colleagues in generating solutions,” to “address the problems they identify in their schools,” and to take “ownership with regard to those problems” (p. 103).

Intersections

Griffiths’ (2006) essay provides a starting point from which to explore the gendered, heteronormed, raced, and classed aspects of teacher leadership:

Practices are marked by embodiment . . . practices, like the human beings who create them, are relational and formed in particular material circumstances. Teaching is intensely personal and corporeal. Thus, practices are fluid. They leak into each other. Their boundaries are permeable. Being a woman teacher also means being seen by students and colleagues as—and perhaps seeing herself as—

a daughter, auntie, mother, nanny . . . The practice of teaching leaks into the practices of mothering, fathering, managing, facilitating, counseling, and philosophizing—and vice versa . . . Practices are not only leaky but also viscous. They flow, slowly and stickily, in response to internal and external changes. (pp. 395–396)

Teacher leadership is a practice that indeed should be seen as “leaky” and “viscous.”

Some scholars have begun to consider teacher leadership in context of the gendered space of teaching and the intersectionality of identity and its impact on the way teachers enact leadership. As Collay (2006) explains:

Teacher professional identity is rooted in . . . values shaped by individual life experiences that reflect culturally prescribed roles and expectations of women and men, educators of color and White, teachers gay and straight. Like actors, new teachers . . . join a cast and walk on the set of a complex production. Their individually-held beliefs play off of and are tested by the various members of the cast, including students, families, colleagues, and supervisors. (p. 133)

In later research, Collay (2010) investigated the experiences of teacher leaders of color who work towards social justice. She found,

Diverse gender, race and class roles converge within identities of contemporary teacher activists . . . Some might say teacher activism is an unrecognized form of leadership because of the race, language and gender of the ‘leaders’ as well as the invisibility of the clients they serve. Others might conclude that activist teacher leaders of colour are sidelined or discouraged from moving into positional leadership by mainstream central office personnel, traditional recruitment programmes or university faculty. (p. 231)

Parker (2010) looked at the experiences of Black male National Board Certified Teachers and both Dingus (2008) and Robinson and Baber (2013) looked at those of Black women teacher leaders. These teachers expressed a strong social justice focus to

their teacher leadership work. This research also highlights that informal networks within in the community, including other Black teachers as mentors, were critical sources of development for these teachers. These networks were often established through family, community, and church connections—not necessarily through schools or districts. In fact, participants in these studies reported feeling alienated from their mostly White colleagues and unable to develop collaborative or even collegial relationships with them. The Black men in Parker’s (2010) study also expressed feelings of emasculation in the White female-dominated world of teaching.

Mills and Schall (2012) interviewed six Latina teacher leaders working in South Texas. Several of those interviewed echoed York-Barr and Duke’s (2004) “crab-bucket culture” in their expressed belief that Latina culture also discouraged striving for individual leadership. The authors decry this egalitarianism as a powerful barrier to teacher leadership. Durias (2010) looked at the experiences of women of color (Black, Latina, and Asian) in formal teacher leadership roles and found that they valued risk-taking as an aspect of their leadership more so than their White colleagues in the same roles. Some of the subjects in Durias’ study felt that racist beliefs on the part of school administration undermined their leadership. The teacher leaders of color also felt that relationships with their colleagues changed for the better once they took on formal leadership roles while their White peers in the same roles felt the opposite. Durias speculates that this could be the result of the fact that teachers of color needed a formal leadership position before their mostly White peers would respect them. This finding

also problematizes the idea that the feminized space of teaching universally values egalitarianism across race and class.

Teacher leadership has been difficult to define partly because many scholars have failed to consider teacher leadership as practiced in feminine ways. Specifically related to teachers' unions, Bascia (1998) found that teacher leadership roles were often gendered masculine with only those projecting an aggressive and assertive presence being chosen. Women's involvement in union leadership was often seen as more collaborative and conciliatory. Podsajek (2009) examined the leadership practices of female elementary school teachers. They described the complexities of negotiating both *power over* relationships and *power with* relationships with administrators and colleagues. Administrators often placed teacher leaders in positions that reduced the teachers' authority to enact leadership. These teacher leaders lacked authority over their own leadership work—the principal had to give them permission to lead. This situation often resulted in resistance behaviors in peers that Podsajek interpreted to be a result of jealousies created by the fact that principals bestowed leadership on some and not others. This often created feelings of isolation and personal insult for the teacher leaders.

In several studies looking at teacher perception of teacher leadership, it seems that teachers themselves are unwilling to recognize leadership actions that are gendered feminine (Angelle & DeHart, 2011; Helterbran, 2010; Paredes Scribner & Bradley-Levine, 2010). Podsajek (2009) explains,

Asking a teacher if they are a leader, and accepting their answer as an illustration of their identity as a leader is misleading. The conclusion drawn from the frequently given answer of “no” would be that teachers either don't know that

they are leaders or don't want to be leaders. Rather, I would argue that there is a discrepancy between how women teachers see and experience leadership and those definitions of leadership commonly accepted in the field of education. M. Grumet (personal communication, February 21, 2008) noted that teachers, particularly women teachers, may have been socialized to ignore the possibility that they could be leaders, and will either respond with embarrassment if they do see themselves as a leader or with shame if they do not. Therefore, their own answer to this question does not and cannot reflect the reality of their identity as a leader. (p. 150)

Angelle and DeHart (2011) analyzed differences in perception of teacher leadership by teachers at elementary, middle, and high school levels. They found that at the elementary level, where the percentage of women teachers and the feminization of teaching are both at higher levels, teachers were more likely to define teacher leadership as being a “supra-practitioner”—willing to undertake extra duties—than their peers in secondary education. The elementary teachers were also more likely to define leadership in a classroom context rather than a larger context of the school, district, or profession. In a small study, Paredes Scribner and Bradley-Levine (2010) found troubling gendered leadership roles in a high school setting. “The meaning of teacher leadership was gendered and closely tied to control of students . . . while female teachers actually *led* in important ways . . . their leadership was constructed as ‘support’ or ‘back-up’” (p. 509).

The authors point out that leadership is a cultural construct and how teacher leadership is defined and enacted is dependent on the school culture. The teachers in the study defined teacher leadership in a manner that reinforced patriarchal and hierarchical leadership practices and all participants (male and female) failed to recognize the transformative, servant leadership practices of the female teachers as leadership. The authors ask several questions for future research:

How do cultural rules of enacted leadership and teacher influence reinforce or challenge deeply embedded oppressive practices? What counts as leadership, and how does legitimacy of leadership practice translate into expressions of power, and in whose interests are they directed? How are race and gender implicated in these rules of interaction and influence? And, how do teachers, principals, community members (and others) challenge and change the rules? (p. 518)

Collay (2010) also calls for further research that considers the intersectionality of teacher leaders' identity and a focus on social justice concerns:

Teacher leadership requires self-knowledge, student knowledge, strategic advocacy and change agency. Self-knowledge of leadership acts becomes the foundation on which teachers can build a more public countenance. Rather than transforming one's self 'into' a leader, teachers benefited from recognition of the ways they already led . . . Fully understanding the cultural roots of teacher beliefs about their potential as leaders is essential to reframing school-based leadership. Research on leaders' actions rather than leaders' roles and responsibilities offers a conceptual bridge for teachers who experience conflict between classroom leadership and school-wide leadership, but that bridge must be strengthened with diverse perspectives on leading, learning and collaboration. (pp. 229–230)

Insights from the Bodies of Literature

The various bodies of literature provide some useful tools in the development of a conceptual framework. There are many contradictions within the definition and enactment of teacher leadership. From a feminist approach, however, these should not be seen as binaries but illuminating discourses. As Blackmore (2006) explains: "feminist analyses highlight 'predicaments' for both theorists and practitioners, predicaments being 'problematic states of affairs that admit no easy solution; they may even have no solution at all, being by nature paradoxical'" (p. 188). As Acker (1995) points out, the issue of care in the role of teachers is contradictory, a source of both oppression and moral strength. Griffiths (2006) highlights the contradiction that the feminization of teaching is

both a source of oppression and of resistance to hegemonic masculinity. What Griffiths sees as a source of power, York-Barr and Duke (2004) see as a poisonous “crab bucket” culture. Grumet (2010) illuminates the fact that professionalizing teaching (through means such as teacher leadership) conflicts with the democratic nature of teaching and the ideals of solidarity. Picower (2012) highlights that education can be simultaneously oppressive and liberatory. Again, these tensions cannot be resolved to dichotomies but must be seen in dialog with each other. Finally, Griffiths’s (2006) description of teaching practices as being “leaky” and “viscous” is a valuable image and framework in which to describe the practices of teacher leadership (p. 396).

Conceptual Frameworks

At its heart, an examination of teacher leadership is an examination of the negotiation of power. Teachers engage in leadership within schools, districts, and communities with limited positional authority. The work of teacher leadership is often collaborative in nature and involves complex and “leaky” relationships with a variety of stakeholders. As a result, the power to do the work of teacher leadership must be negotiated. Currently the literature generally fails to address:

The complex, diffuse ways that power flows within and through individual subjects who do not always behave in rational, predictable ways. Feminist and poststructuralist scholars in the field of education challenge both a dualistic oppressor/oppressed model of power and the notion of power as a commodity that individuals possess and exchange. (North, 2008, p. 1192)

Developing a more holistic understanding of teacher leadership practice requires examining the flow of power and the ways in which teacher leaders negotiate power within their teaching contexts.

For the purposes of examining the flow and negotiation of power by teacher leaders, I relied on the Domains of Power framework articulated by Patricia Hill Collins (2009) as tool and guiding conceptual framework. While Collins uses the framework specifically to discuss the systems of power responsible for color-blind racism and how those systems function in public schools, it is very applicable to the actions of teacher leaders (often taken with social justice intent). The framework conceptualizes four domains through which power flows in the landscape of teachers. The four domains of power are: structural (the organization of social institutions), disciplinary (enforcement of policy and surveillance), cultural (the myths that legitimize oppression), and interpersonal (everyday interactions).

Using this framework as a lens to examine the negotiation of power within the work of teacher leadership highlights important connections and interactions. The strength in this model is that it conceptualizes the complexity of power as neither a top-down or bottom-up phenomenon. Oppression is both “produced and resisted *within* each domain of power as well as *across* all four domains” (Collins, 2009, p. 55). It reflects the fact that education can be simultaneously oppressive and liberatory and teachers can simultaneously engage in both oppressive practices and resistance to oppressive forces.

In the early stages of my dissertation, I developed the image in Figure 1 as a conceptual map. This conceptual map reflects the nature of teacher leadership practice as

nested within the overlapping and discursive spaces of hegemonic masculinity, the feminized space of teaching, and a teacher's intersectional identity. Teacher leadership is enacted and experienced throughout these spaces through the four domains of power. All boundaries are also appropriately "leaky" and "viscous" represented by the diffused visual boundaries.

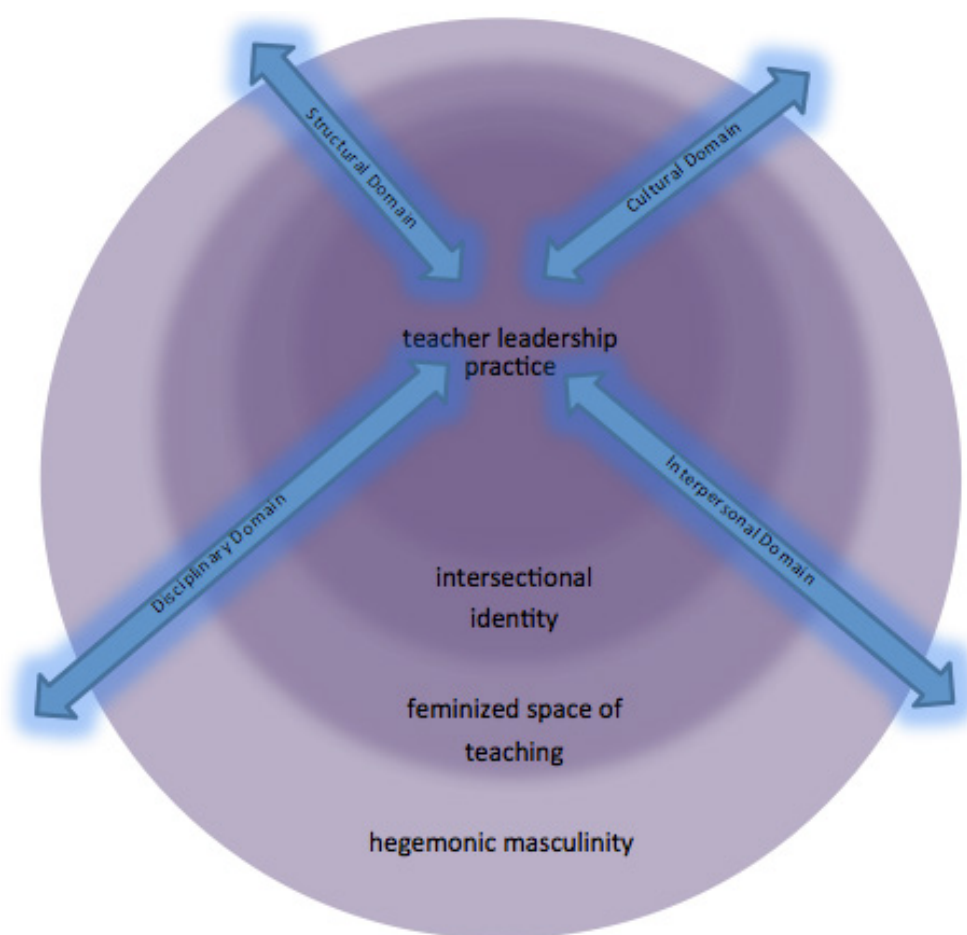


Figure 1. Conceptual Map.

As the research progressed, however, I found this conceptual map became less useful as it seemed insufficient in capturing the complexity of teacher leadership practice.

The model evolved into a 3D form analogous to a model of the earth (see Figure 2). The nested layers are like the layers of the earth and the flow of power much like the magnetic field that flows within and through the air, water, land, and ice (domains) of the surface. This flow of power is invisible and is impacted by the nature of the substance (domain) through which it flows. The borders between the nested layers and the domains are interactive and porous.

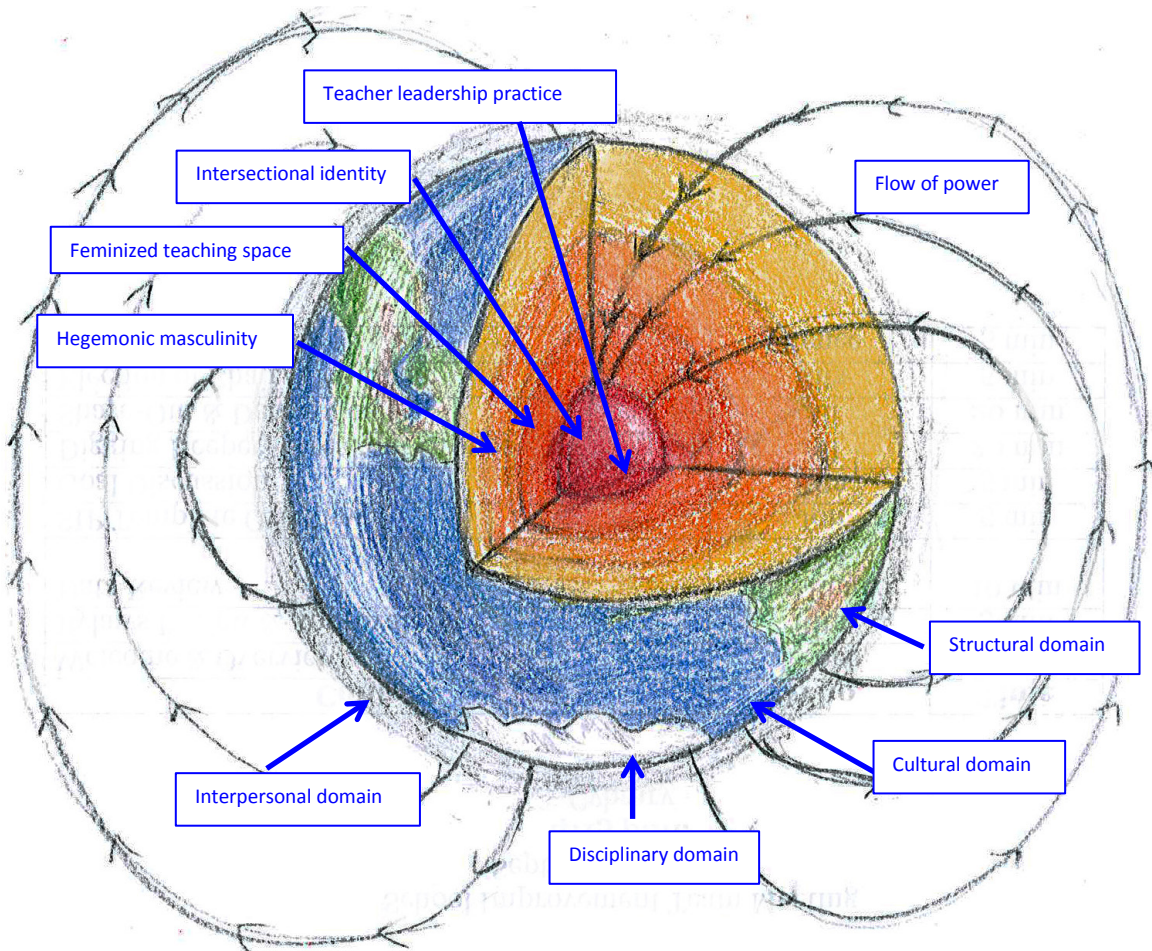


Figure 2. Revised Conceptual Map.

Chapter Summary

The historic legacy of teaching still dramatically shapes its practice today. The domination of women in the field and the conflation of the work of teaching and “instinctive female knowledge” has insured the place of teaching as a low status semi-profession (Galman, 2012, p. 12). Research suggests that women often enter the profession due to its alignment with their socialized feminine norms. The traditional gendered division of labor in schools place men in the roles of principals and superintendents and women in subordinate roles as teachers. The result is that teachers rarely have control of their own work and little input into policy decisions that impact students and schools. This further reinforces larger systems of oppression and gendered labor.

Teacher leadership is one of the policy movements intended to correct the low status and deprofessionalization of teaching. Most scholars, however, fail to address the fact that this aspect of the teaching profession is a result of the feminization of teaching. The teacher leadership literature has been criticized for failing to challenge patriarchal and hierarchical power structures, promote shared power instead of shared leadership, address social justice concerns, and include teacher voices. Many scholars have focused much energy on the “obstacle” of the “crab bucket culture” in teaching that discourages teachers from “moving up” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 272).

Placed in the context of women’s approaches to leadership, however, the “crab bucket culture” can be seen as the feminist practice of solidarity and *power with* instead of *power over* individuals (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). The literature on teacher

leadership also fails to emphasize the impulse for social justice that motivates many women in education leadership, especially women of color. The research related to the work of teaching and educational leadership for social justice highlights the themes of relationship building and the use of professional networks. Finally, a small and emerging body of literature presents a more nuanced and complex understanding of teacher leadership by considering the role of race and gender in its practice.

The failure of the literature as a whole to sufficiently address issues of intersectional identity and gendered expectations of teachers throws many of our current assumptions about the practice of teacher leadership into question. Teacher leadership that contributes to improved outcomes for students and more socially just schools (and society as a whole) is, of course, desirable and should be understood and encouraged. However, given the complex and multifaceted nature of power, we need much more insight into the contextual practice of teacher leadership to guide such policy and professional development.

Applying a critical feminist lens to the literature highlights many unresolvable contradictions within the work of teacher leadership including the role of care in the practice of teachers, the simultaneously oppressive and liberatory nature of the feminized space of teaching and of education itself, and the tension between the professionalization of teaching and the democratic nature of public schooling. The work of teacher leadership can best be described as practices that are “leaky” and “viscous” in the sense that they blend and flow into multiple aspects of the lives and work of teachers (Griffiths, 2006). The Domains of Power framework (Collins, 2009) provides more clarity to these

“leaky” practices and the negotiation of power in the work of teacher leaders. I used these conceptual frameworks to guide my collection, analysis, and interpretation of data related to my research questions. In the next chapter, I explain my use of a collaborative autoethnographic approach to research teacher leadership practice. By collectively examining our own experiences as teacher leaders, the participants address many of the gaps in teacher leadership literature. This approach provides the voices of teachers themselves from the rich context of a gendered landscape and multi-layered, intersectional identities that are largely missing from the literature.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Given the complexities of intersectional identity, the gendered space of teaching, and the negotiation of power, the choice of an appropriate methodology was critical. I sought a methodology that would provide a rich, holistic view of teacher leadership practice as well as analysis and interpretation aligned with critical feminist thought—all while giving primacy to the voices of practicing teacher leaders. Since my research questions arose out of the misalignment of my own lived experience with the literature, I hoped to include myself as a participant in the study. Autoethnographic approaches seemed appropriate, but I felt I needed more data than just examining my experiences could provide.

I discovered literature on collaborative autoethnographic research methods that provided the missing richness and rigor through the inclusion of multiple autoethnographic perspectives. This methodology was also well aligned with the feminist theory and practice guiding my research. Specifically, it gave participants a more active role and clearer voice in the research and provided some counterweight to the power imbalance between researcher and subject. In choosing this approach to conduct my research, the research process itself also served as an exercise in teacher leadership. This chapter addresses the underlying rationale, the participants involved, the data collection and analysis processes, and the ethical concerns related to my research.

Rationale

This study is grounded in what Burrell and Morgan (1979) define as the radical humanist tradition of sociological research, specifically Critical Theory with its understanding that “knowledge is socially constructed, contextual, and dependent on interpretation” (McLaren & Giarelli, 1995, p. 2). My research examines the issue of teacher leadership through a critical feminist lens to deconstruct issues of power, privilege, and oppression in teacher leadership while remaining aware of the intersectionality of race, class, heteronormativity, gender, and other identity factors. Teacher leadership has been discussed in the literature almost exclusively in gender-neutral terms despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of those enacting it are women. The space of teaching is gendered feminine and the role of teacher is gendered feminine (and heterosexual), but these spaces are negotiated by raced, classed, gendered, and heteronormed/queered individuals. The literature is lacking in complexity and nuance related to those practices.

Collaborative autoethnography is grounded in feminist practices including the use of feminist interpretations of poststructuralist understandings of power, resistance to binary thinking, incorporating women’s voices and women’s ways of knowing including valuing knowledge that is personal, subjective, and experiential (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986), and valuing research participants as co-researchers (Kohli & Burbles, 2012; Mann, 2012; Maynard & Purvis, 1994; Sprague, 2005). The unequal power dynamics created by the separate roles of researcher and participant are very problematic through a critical lens. There is conceptual grounding and existing precedent

within educational research (going back to Habermas and Freire) for connected practitioner-researcher and participant-researcher relationships (Midgley, Danaher, & Baguley, 2013). This perspective rejects the positivist conception of a necessary separation between *researcher* and *participant* or between *practitioner* and *researcher*. Not only are such separations unrealistic, they are obstacles to real sense-making in the research process.

Complicating the idea of researching the enactment of teacher leadership by women teachers is that they may reject the label of leadership. Podsajec (2009) highlights this with her communication with Madeline Grumet:

I would argue that there is a discrepancy between how women teachers see and experience leadership and those definitions of leadership commonly accepted in the field of education. M. Grumet (personal communication, February 21, 2008) noted that teachers, particularly women teachers, may have been socialized to ignore the possibility that they could be leaders, and will either respond with embarrassment if they do see themselves as a leader or with shame if they do not. (p. 150)

Galman (2012) found strong adherence to valued feminine norms among pre-service teachers. These norms generally exclude many behaviors associated with leadership as it has often been defined by scholars. Therefore, it is important for participants themselves to consider how their own identities and socialization may impact how they understand, define, and enact leadership. Teachers are well-educated professionals working in a field where self-reflective practice and understanding complex social interactions are the norm. As such, they should have great ability to provide thoughtful insight into their own practices through the autoethnographic process. This insight would be difficult to gain by

other means and would provide the richness and nuance necessary to address the research questions.

The collaborative autoethnographic approach combines the self-reflective interpretations of multiple participants in a collaborative approach to sense-making from the shared data (Chang et al., 2013). In this approach, the researcher serves as a participant and all participants engage in self-reflection, self-interrogation, and/or self-observation. They then share this self-reflective data and engage in group analysis, interpretation, discussion, probing, and sense-making. This process is often repeated and can even lead to collaborative data review, collaborative writing, and shared authorship. With a focus on how individuals interpret their context and its connection to their experiences and perspectives, autoethnography provides insight into identity, socialization, and complex practices such as teacher leadership. Including multiple self-reflective perspectives provides a richer, less subjective, and more rigorous final product. In a collaborative autoethnography, some or all data collection, analysis, and writing can be done collaboratively by a group of participants (Chang et al., 2013).

In adapting this methodology to my research, a group of five teacher leaders engaged in the autoethnographic process through reflective, informal writings and four in-person group discussions. These approaches were chosen due to their comfort and familiarity to educators. While participants were provided the option to complete their reflections through audio or video means or even artwork if they preferred, no one chose to use these forms. The amount of interaction was limited due to the busy schedules of working professionals, the distances that some participants had to drive, and the

anticipated level of commitment from volunteer research participants. Due to the nature of dissertation research, the other participants had a limited role in data analysis and no role in writing the dissertation.

Research Methods

Participants

Participants who are currently engaged in enacting non-administrative teacher leadership were recruited from my local area through social media posts and email listservs using an IRB-approved recruitment statement (see Appendix A). They were provided an IRB-approved informed consent form. The recruitment statement emphasized that participation would be active and require an estimated time commitment of ten hours, including three in-person meetings (a fourth meeting was later requested). After expressing interest in participating, potential participants were provided with a study summary (Appendix B) that outlined the research questions, the autoethnographic process, and some key points from the review of literature. Four participants agreed to the commitment and I served as a participant as well, creating a total of five. Two participants were recruited through my professional network, one participant was recruited through a post on a Facebook group for teachers, and one was recruited through an email listserv group associated with my university.

While the recruiting information did not specify gender, race, or age, all five participants were women. The participants in this study are referred to by pseudonyms Ann, Barbara, Diane, Julie, and Sherri. At the time of the data collection, we were all 36–50 years old with 10–25 years of teaching experience. All participants have lived in

the South for at least seven years. Three participants currently work in urban settings and two in rural settings, and we all have experience working with minority students and students in poverty. All have teaching experience limited to middle and high schools. All participants were currently or formerly in heterosexual marriages. Two of the participants are in formal teacher leadership roles with no teaching duties while the other three are full time classroom teachers. All participants were provided with \$75.00 in Amazon gift cards for their time at the researcher's personal expense.

Ann. Ann is a White woman who has lived in the South her whole life. She started her teaching career immediately after leaving her undergraduate education program and taught visual arts in a large urban/suburban high school for 13 years. She now works as an instructional coach at an arts-themed magnet school serving grades 6–12. She holds a Master's degree in Art Education and is National Board Certified. She is married with no children.

Barbara. Barbara is a Black woman originally from the South. She entered teaching ten years ago as a lateral entry candidate at age 40. Prior to that she had worked as a legal secretary and customer service supervisor. She holds a Master's degree in Liberal Studies. She has taught Social Studies and History subjects at middle and high schools including charter schools. Currently she teaches History classes at an early college program in the rural county she grew up in. She is a divorced mother of three grown children and has two grandchildren.

Diane. Diane is a White woman originally from the Midwest. After completing her undergraduate education in English/Creative Writing and Psychology she taught

English overseas for six years before relocating to the South and completing a Master's of Arts in Teaching program. She is National Board Certified. She has taught in U.S. public schools for seven years. Her teaching experience has all been with high school-aged students in English classes. Currently she works at an early college program in an urban setting. She is married and has two young stepsons in her interracial and bilingual family.

Julie. Julie is a Black woman originally from the Midwest. She taught various levels and electives in high school English in large urban high schools for 14 years before becoming an instructional coach at an alternative high school. She holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership. She is married with a teenaged daughter and is very active in her state and local NEA affiliate.

Sherri. Sherri is a White woman who began her teaching career in very rural Appalachian schools. Tired of the labor unrest and economic volatility of the area and after being routinely moved to other schools due to reduction in force policies, she relocated. Her experience is in high school English and many of her 25 years of experience have been in alternative school settings. Currently she teaches at a large comprehensive high school in a rural county that is situated near a large metropolitan center. She is National Board Certified and holds a Master's degree in English Education. She is married with two teenaged stepsons.

Data Collection

The participants met for three one-hour group discussions in the months of September, October, and November 2014 and a final follow-up session in August 2015.

The meetings took place in the study room of a local public library and were audio recorded and transcribed. In between each session, participants were asked to complete autoethnographic writing based on reflective questions that the group agreed upon.

Questions asked after the first meeting were:

1. What is your understanding of teacher leadership and how and why you enact it?
2. In various school contexts/cultures that you have experienced, what characteristics or resources have served as sources of power/influence in enacting teacher leadership and which have served as obstacles to teacher leadership?

Questions after the second meeting were:

1. How do you negotiate power in your teacher leadership context?
2. What roles do gender, race, and other important aspects of your identity and your teaching environment play in how you negotiate power?

All participants attended at least three of the four meetings, and no meeting contained less than three individuals. All participants completed all autoethnographic writing tasks. Writing samples and meeting transcripts were posted in a shared Google Drive folder to which all participants had access. Participants were asked to review information in the folder prior to our meetings and to formulate thoughts or questions for the group discussion based on the material found there. I routinely clarified my role as an equal participant and allowed and encouraged others to direct the group conversation.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

In the collaborative autoethnographic process, data analysis and interpretation are ongoing and concurrent with data collection. Both the researcher and other participants analyzed their own experiences and the experiences of others, asked probing questions of themselves and others, and identified themes within and throughout our discussions and reflections. The group discussion format provided opportunities for one participant to connect to the experiences of others. At the first meeting, the group began to identify “sources of power” and “obstacles” to enact teacher leadership. As a result, the first set of reflection questions was revised to reflect this conception of teacher leadership and provided an entry point for further discussion.

Frequently, a topic or story was explored both in writing and in discussion providing a rich data source as participants explored their experiences more deeply and worked to better articulate the insight provided. After reviewing the transcripts, a participant pointed out that even though questions were aimed at interactions with colleagues, participants routinely answered with discussion of students and/or parents. This led the group to explore the complexity and intricacy of the relationships we experienced. The group interaction also led to valuable insights as to the importance of coalition building in teacher leadership and the ability to be flexible and adaptable. The group engaged in frank and insightful discussions of the role of race in their teaching environments.

At the end of data collection, I completed a holistic review of all transcripts and matching audio recording and writing samples to further identify themes and patterns.

Themes related to the research questions were identified from this review and coded on hard copies of the data using color-coding. Themes were identified related to how the space of teaching was gendered and how identity factors affected the enactment of teacher leadership. Coding based on the Domains of Power framework (Collins, 2009) was completed last, which highlighted the underlying connections to the first two categories of themes. Finally, the data was reviewed again for insights based on recommendations from Chang's (2008) work on autoethnography: look for cultural themes, identify exceptional occurrences, analyze inclusion and omission, connect the present to the past, analyze relationships between self and others, compare cases, contextualize broadly, compare with social science constructs, and frame with theories. Codes, frequency charts, and example quotes were posted in the shared Google Drive folder along with a summary of data interpretation for the participants to review. Feedback from the group confirmed interpretation was accurate and that relevant themes had been properly identified and coded.

Codes and Frequency Charts

As women teachers, participants reported strong expectations of support/nurturing, passivity, heteronormative and feminine gender expression, collaboration, and of "leaky" teacher identity. These themes are discussed in detail in the next chapter. These themes were coded in a frequency chart (see Table 1).

Table 1
Frequencies of Feminized Themes

	Support	Passivity	Physicality	Leaky	Collaboration
Ann	2	2	6	2	5
Sherri	4	4	0	1	2
Julie	6	2	1	1	2
Barbara	6	1	0	2	2
Diane	3	7	3	1	2
Total	21	16	10	7	13

As teacher leaders, we often faced assumptions and expectations based on identity factors such as gender, race, age, class (often meaning the class of the students we taught), and cultural identity. When faced with such assumptions and expectations, the data reveals that we often chose to ignore or avoid addressing those assumptions, to *play to* expectations when advantageous, and/or *play against* negative assumptions. In enacting teacher leadership, individual participants often had to address cultural myths that lead people to believe that women and people of color cannot be effective leaders. These themes are discussed more fully in the next chapter. These themes and whether they were *played to* (PT), *played against* (PA), or *ignored* (I) were coded in the frequency chart illustrated in Table 2.

The four domains of power (Collins, 2009) are (a) structural (the organization of social institutions), (b) disciplinary (enforcement of policy and surveillance), (c) cultural (the myths that legitimize oppression), and (d) interpersonal (everyday interactions). As

teacher leaders negotiate power, they do so within and across these domains. Statements were categorized by one of more domains and recorded in the frequency chart shown in Table 3.

Table 2

Identity Themes

	Age			Class			Gender			Race		
	PT	PA	I	PT	PA	I	PT	PA	I	PT	PA	I
Ann			1	1	1	1		1		1	2	
Sherri	1			1	1		1	2			1	
Julie			1	1	2			4		1	3	
Barbara	2		1				2	1		5	7	2
Diane	1	1	2				2	5		4	3	1
Totals	4	1	5	3	4	1	5	13	0	11	16	3

Note. PT = Played to; PA = Played against; I = Ignored

Table 3

Frequencies of Statements Categorized by Domains of Power

	Structural	Disciplinary	Cultural	Interpersonal
Ann	5	12	10	16
Sherri	10	17	15	11
Julie	4	5	13	16
Barbara	6	12	14	13
Diane	6	14	15	28
Total	31	60	67	84

The identification of these themes and the frequency at which they were addressed by different participants provided structure and insight to my interpretation of the data. While there was clearly some alignment with our experiences related to gendered expectations in our work as teachers, our various experiences and intersectional identities shaped which expectations we were most aware of as individuals. The frequency charts also demonstrated that the group was most aware of how perceptions of race and gender impacted their work as teacher leaders. In considering the Domains of Power framework, it seems that we mentioned the negotiation of power most frequently in the interpersonal domain by a wide margin followed by the cultural domain and disciplinary domains. The structural domain was mentioned the least frequently by far, suggesting possibly less impact (or less awareness of impact) of this domain on our work as teacher leaders.

Ethical Concerns, Trustworthiness, and Limitations

Participants are identified by pseudonyms in this publication. Participants were warned of the ethical concerns of involuntary participants—other people who are described or discussed in the participants’ narratives. These involuntary participants are not identified by name and other details that might identify them have been left out. While participants did not identify their last name, school, or district to each other, our prolonged interaction means that the participants’ identities may be known to each other. Participants were also reminded that the information shared was to be confidential. However, such confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in a group context. While thoughtful effort was put into establishing trust, it is possible that this research context may have

prevented some personal disclosure on the part of the participants. Any such silences found in the data can also be informative to the analysis and interpretation.

Prior to the study, participants were provided with the research questions and sources from literature as starting points for discussion or reflection (see Appendix B). There is a slight risk that this prior information may have impacted the participants' responses, especially considering that there were likely lingering impacts of the power differential between researcher and subject despite my efforts at creating an equitable environment. However, one of the other participants holds an Ed.D. degree and all the others have completed Master's degrees with a research component. Given the fact that most of the other participants had research experience and were being consulted as experienced teacher leaders means that it is unlikely that my position as researcher would have drastically swayed the information provided. The data also does not reflect this since on many occasions, participants disagreed with points from the literature review and/or with me.

Including myself as a participant also carried the risk of skewing the research. It is arguable, however, that researcher bias is never truly removed in any case. Opening up my self-reflection to others and considering the perspective of peers with very different experiences than mine added to the rigor of the autoethnographic approach. Indeed, several of the assumptions with which I entered the research process I abandoned as participants provided evidence to the contrary. An example is my assumption that teacher leaders would modify their performance of race or gender when necessary to

overcome obstacles to teacher leadership. A thorough examination of our experience demonstrated that was almost never the case.

Credibility and dependability were maintained by ongoing interaction with participants and their review of transcripts, coding, and interpretation and through the collection of multiple sources and formats of data. The process might have benefitted from a more prolonged interaction. However, a greater time commitment could not be expected from volunteers without a greater incentive for participation, which would not have been practical for self-funded research and might have raised more ethical concerns. The role of other participants in analysis completed at the end of data collection and the drafting of this report was limited to review and feedback due to the nature of dissertation research and the extended time commitment that such participation would require. The transferability of the study is limited by the fact that it involved only five women teachers who self-identified as teacher leaders and social justice advocates. However, the alignment of the experience of these participants to the body of research suggests that some themes are likely transferrable to other settings.

Some Reflection on the Collaborative Autoethnographic Process

Since collaborative autoethnography is a rather novel research approach, I would like to go beyond the simple discussion of methods and provide some personal insight on the process. The experience was truly enjoyable and enlightening. The methodology was well aligned to the skills I have developed as a teacher. Teaching is the process of observing and interpreting the words, actions, motives, and understandings of others. As a teacher, I am constantly analyzing both individual students and the group dynamics and

interactions of a classroom. Teaching requires quick shifts from inductive to deductive reasoning and from a narrow focus to broad view. Teaching well also requires constant reflection and introspection. Turning this skill set towards the purpose of gathering data surrounding my experiences as a teacher leader was a natural transition. Doing so collaboratively with other colleagues created deep connections and feelings of solidarity, empowerment, and professional growth for all of us. Not only will this research contribute to the scholarly body of knowledge about teacher leadership, but also the research process itself was an enactment of critical and collaborative leadership towards socially just goals—an embodiment of our own teacher leadership practices.

Summary

Data was collected using a collaborative autoethnographic methodology with five women participants who were active teacher leaders. Collaborative autoethnography was chosen due to its alignment with feminist research practices and its ability to provide unique insight into the complex and nuanced practices of teacher leadership. In addition to the collaborative data analysis that happened as part of the four in-person focus group meetings, I analyzed the transcripts of these meetings and the self-reflective writing produced by the participants using the Domains of Power framework. Additionally, themes emerged of support, passivity, feminine gender expression, collaboration, and “leaky” teacher identity related to the gendered space of teaching. Themes of age, class, gender, and race emerged related to identity factors. Ethical concerns were addressed through the use of pseudonyms and protections for involuntary participants. Trustworthiness, credibility, and dependability were ensured through the use of multiple

autoethnographic perspectives, group probing and sense-making, and extending interaction with participants and their review of transcripts, data analysis, and dissertation drafts. The next chapter further explains the data gathered during this research process through a discussion of the findings and the analysis and interpretation of them.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATIONS

The collaborative ethnographic examination of our lived experiences and the analysis, interpretation, and synthesis of the data I conducted separately revealed insight into the original research questions. Specifically, the data revealed a deeper understanding of how the landscape of teaching has been gendered feminine and how those gendered expectations as well as personal identity factors impact the enactment of teacher leadership. Using the Domains of Power conceptual framework (Collins, 2009) to examine the dynamics of power surrounding teacher leadership provides deeper understanding of how power functions in this environment.

Quotes from participants were gathered both from the transcripts/recordings of our group discussions and individual reflective writing that the participants completed. To provide clarity, all quotes taken from the participants' reflective writing will be identified with the words *wrote* or *in her writing*. Quotes not clearly identified with those terms were oral statements made during our group discussion.

Research Questions

To gain insight and understanding on the practice of teacher leadership in the context of the gendered space of teaching, the intersectional identity of teachers, and the complex negotiation of power, the data was considered in context of the previously defined research questions.

1. How has teacher leadership been defined? By whom? Whose interests do these definitions of teacher leadership serve?
2. How do the gendered aspects of teaching affect how teacher leadership is defined and enacted?
3. How do the raced, classed, and gendered/heteronormed aspects of teachers' identities affect how they enact teacher leadership?
4. How is power negotiated by teacher leaders?

Defining Teacher Leadership

Varying and nebulous definitions of teacher leadership are partly the result of the complexity of the task of teaching and the complexity of the relationships between the various stakeholders involved. One of the key themes highlighted by the research group was the intricacy and complexity of our relationships with parents, students, community members, and our families and how those relationships bleed into one another. Griffiths' (2006) description of teaching practices as “leaky” and “viscous” seems particularly applicable:

Teaching is intensely personal and corporeal. Thus, practices are fluid. They leak into each other. Their boundaries are permeable . . . The practice of teaching leaks into the practices of mothering, fathering, managing, facilitating, counseling, and philosophizing—and vice versa . . . Practices are not only leaky but also viscous. They flow, slowly and stickily, in response to internal and external changes. (pp. 395–396)

Diane described the “leaky” nature of teacher leadership this way:

In order to be an effective teacher leader in your community you have to have relationships with other adult leadership within your community and that in, so

many cases, is going to be the parents and that can be a really tricky relationship to navigate depending on what your encounters are with each other, whether or not you know each other outside of the school community—it just becomes a very complex dynamic.

Participants described specific examples of complex and “leaky” relationships that they have experienced or witnessed: teaching the child of her husband’s boss, teaching the children of district leaders and school board members, teaching the child of a local activist promoting a redistricting plan, being both a parent and colleague as her own children attended schools in the district, working for a school board member who is her former teacher, and working with colleagues who have immediate family members working in district positions. In this context, teacher leadership may take on a variety of forms, purposes, and activities.

Reviewing the body of literature, it is clear that differing conceptions of teacher leadership are also founded in differing paradigms. Some understandings of teacher leadership approach the issue from only the point of view of managerial efficiency, devoid of contextual factors (see Taylor, 2009). Others place teacher leaders explicitly or implicitly in the existing power structure of schools to support the existing hegemony (see Barth, 2011; Zepeda et al., 2003). Others see varying degrees of alignment with teacher leadership and the work of social justice (see Collay, 2011; Hilty, 2011). *Social justice* can be thought of as “disrupting and subverting arrangements that promote marginalization and exclusionary processes” (Theoharis, 2007, p. 223).

Teacher leadership grounded in social justice may be seen more narrowly as working towards improved outcomes for disadvantaged students without addressing the

issues of privilege within the school structure while others recognize that engaging in the work of social justice may mean challenging and criticizing school structures and policies. Each of the participants made multiple statements in both written and oral form that framed her teacher leadership within her understanding of social justice concerns including the need to question authority when necessary. Some examples include Ann's written statement: "Teacher leadership is about speaking up and taking action . . . sometimes teacher leadership is about challenging authority," Diane's spoken statement: "teachers as a whole need to start being more empowered to say no or to push back in intelligently-framed, collective ways," and Barbara's written statement that teacher leadership was about being "a catalyst for change and voice for my colleagues."

Given the research on women in educational leadership from Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011), it would seem that many other women teachers are likely to frame teacher leadership in the context of their understanding of social justice concerns (though their understanding may be limited). It would appear that Barth's (2011) assumption that teachers engage in leadership in order to "sit at the table with grown-ups as a first-class citizen in the school house rather than remain the subordinate in a world full of superordinates" misjudges the motives of many teacher leaders. However, school or district leadership or policy expectations may be more aligned with managerial or hegemonic concerns, which can create frustration for teacher leaders as illustrated in this conversation between participants:

Julie: Some of the times it seems that teacher leadership is mentioned but maybe it's just another arm of let's say, administration in the school, like getting things

across what they want done, not that it's necessarily important to teachers or other educational stakeholders . . .

Ann: . . . just trying to share the burden of work.

Julie: Yes, right.

All the participants expressed frustration over unclear expectations and what we perceived to be a lack of understanding and/or appreciation of what we considered to be effective teacher leadership. Sherri: "you know, we have these two words, teacher and leader, and I'm not sure what they want from me." Julie: "teacher leadership is a buzzword . . . they want teachers to lead, they say they do, but what that really entails . . . it's not clear."

In summary, the teachers in this study had difficulty separating *teacher leadership* practice from their practice of *teaching* and their "leaky" identity as teachers engaged in complex interactions with others. We engaged in teacher leadership as an extension of our commitment to students and to social justice and a desire for self-efficacy. Our teacher leadership activities were often in opposition to school and district power structures.

The Feminine Gendered Space of Teaching

The research group confirmed that we encountered feminized cultural norms in our teaching environments similar to those described by researchers such as Galman (2012) of altruism, selflessness, and caring. Themes identified in the research and discussed in this section include strong expectations of support/nurturing, passivity,

heteronormative and feminine gender expression, collaboration, and of “leaky” teacher identity.

Support/Nurturing

The data highlights the expectation of support and nurturing, specifically altruistic, unselfish caring. This expectation appears to exist to some degree despite the gender of the teacher, and participants described supportive and nurturing relationships that they experienced with male colleagues, mentors, and administrators. Teachers are often expected to provide *mothering* to the students they work with. Julie and Barbara each felt that their race heightened the expectation of mothering they experienced. Ann and Sherri both agreed that they had observed such stronger expectations of mothering for their Black women colleagues. Barbara in particular, found this expectation uncomfortable and also related to the intersection of her age. She wrote: “With the age factor and being a Black female . . . the assumption [is] that I will be matronly and motherly.” She went on to describe being expressly directed by her principal to provide “mothering” to a struggling student. In the same written reflection she stated: “One of the reasons that I wanted to leave middle school was that I was more mother than teacher and that is not where I wanted to be in the profession or personally.”

Underlying this frustration seems to be Barbara’s perceived incompatibility of *mother* and *professional*. This highlights her socialized acceptance of gendered divisions of labor and of the appropriate characteristics of men and women. Mothers are to be nurturing and working in professional context requires more *masculine* behavior. Barbara did perceive that as a Black woman, others more easily placed her in a mothering

space instead of the intellectual space of her beloved subject matter. She wrote: “I am more in tune to the scholarship and research of teaching history and want to embrace that part more.” She did not feel that this racist expectation fueled her resistance to it, more simply her own feelings on motherhood: “I never thought ‘oh, I’m going to get married and have kids,’ that was never my vision.” In her writing she explained that she disliked “mothering” students simply because “it is exhausting to be that and to teach all day.”

Participants also reported that in some contexts, the expectation of being a mother or even wife extended to male colleagues. Ann wrote about a very negative reaction she received from a male colleague whom she had criticized of in front of other colleagues. She was chastised for failing to “support” the colleague, yet she felt such critical comments were frequently made by male colleagues with no similar repercussion. Diane described that when she served as a department chair for all male colleagues, she was expected to lead by doing extra work: “Initially it was very much like you’re the woman in charge so you’re supposed to do everything and I was like, excuse me, I’m not your wife, I’m not doing your dishes (*laughing*).” Again, this highlights the participant’s socialized acceptance of gendered divisions of labor.

Passivity

The teachers also reported routinely experiencing an expectation of subordination and passivity. It would appear that the gendered nature of teaching increased the gendered expectations for women teachers, yet excused their male colleagues from this expectation. In some contexts, participants reported that male teachers expected

deference, even if they were in equal or even subordinate positions to the women teachers. Sherri described one concrete example in her writing:

One interesting thing that I recall is that we would have a week off for Thanksgiving. The women did not want that. We wanted more time during the Christmas holiday to get everything done. The men wanted to hunt; they won every time!

Diane describes another situation when dealing with a conflict with a male colleague, over whom she actually served as department chair:

The [male] colleague spoke to me like a child in the meeting and several times told me to stop talking because it wasn't my turn, and my [male] administrator just sat there and let him speak to me like that, and I actually then turned to him and said 'I will not be spoken to like a child' . . . this was the part that really got me, and that I've been trying to sort through, after the meeting that same administrator sat with me in his office for an hour after school talking about what happened and . . . named all of the things that this other teacher had done inappropriately, but that he did not call him out on it at all in this meeting.

It would appear that in Diane's experience, the male administrator was unwilling to challenge the male colleague in front of her, and both male parties expected passivity on her part during the discussion. Other participants discussed occasions where they felt pressured to yield in order to protect the egos of men—colleagues, parents, and students.

Collaboration

Working collaboratively was another gendered norm we identified.

Collaboration in this case was a very specific sense of being cooperative, collegial, and willing to work with others towards a general common goal—to be a team player with unselfish motives. We perceived an underlying sense of egalitarianism to this

expectation. This norm became evident as we expressed frustration over colleagues (specifically male colleagues) that failed to work collaboratively or at least cooperate with us. Even though the group saw ourselves as engaged in the work of social justice and often questioned authority, we still maintained expectations of a certain level of compliance. Sherri: “We all know that sometimes we just shut our doors and do what we need to do, but there are also times where we have to do whether we want to or not.” Diane complained about a colleague in the department she chairs: “I asked him or let him know that we have this deadline to meet and I’ll have to ask him again and again and again . . . and sometimes I end up having to do it myself.” As the group analyzed this concern, Diane offered this insight:

When I think about the male teachers I’ve had really good working relationships with, collaborative relationships with versus not, it’s the level of confidence they have in themselves [sic] as a teacher. As an educator they feel insecure about learning new things or implementing new concepts, and they feel like I’m confident about what I’m doing, that’s where I feel like there starts to be a pull (*gesturing*). As that new male teacher has grown more confident, his relationship with me has gotten better and better, which is interesting.

The group agreed that they had all experienced better collaborative relationships with older, more experienced male colleagues than younger, less experienced ones. It is possible that this relates to the ability of the long-serving male teachers to negotiate power in the gendered space of teaching. In general, the group described a greater comfort with what Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) describe as “power with” rather than “power over” relationships with colleagues.

In our experience, the “crab bucket culture” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004) that discouraged “moving up” was about lack of trust in those who would seek positional, hierarchical authority—and therefore implicitly support the forces of hegemonic oppression. In the realities of the complex flow of power in schools, those with positional authority often actually lose power and the moral high ground that comes with direct interaction with students. Both Julie and Ann, who had left the classroom for formal teacher leader roles, ironically felt less empowered because of expectations of their roles and the new connection to district level politics. Diane agreed that this was a concern:

If people are looking to make their way to the central office or whatever, they’re a lot more cautious about how they navigate the road . . . if you’re not worried about what position you’re moving up to, you’re a lot more empowered to say what needs to be said.

Pulling other “crabs” back we often perceived to be an act of solidarity, empowerment, and resistance to oppressive forces.

This phenomenon was also aligned with the passive and nurturing feminized expectations for teachers. The perception that a teacher was engaged in leadership for anything but selfless and altruistic reasons could quickly lead to resistance from colleagues. Several of us reported having to make explicitly clear we are not interested in administrative or district positions in order to earn the trust and respect of our colleagues. Barbara and Sherri demonstrate how we have all internalized this expectation:

Barbara: I was just doing my job, what I was supposed to do to the best of my ability . . . and was voted teacher of the year . . . not for what I saw as asking for it, it was just the things that I thought I was supposed to do.

Sherri: I too was named teacher of the year this year. But I feel like all of a sudden that I'm exact same as you, I'm just going to go in that room and do what I need to do for those kids, that's why I'm there. And I think if you have people you work with view your leadership as we're all equals but you can be a voice for us . . . you sort of rise to those positions and get accepted.

The norms of support and collaboration meant that the participants could also describe occasions like this when they felt the other “crabs” pushing them forward toward teacher leadership. Ann wrote that she found no competition for leadership roles in one school she worked in as the long-standing faculty was “unwilling to risk personal relationships and group acceptance” to take on these roles. As a new faculty member, she had no such concerns and found that her colleagues appreciated her willingness to tackle leadership challenges at the school. Interestingly, the egalitarian norms were often negotiated as both an obstacle and a source of power. In the murkiness of our teacher leadership roles, we found way to emphasize our equal standing when needed and ways to emphasize any small amount of positional authority or seniority when needed. Diane highlights this murkiness in this statement:

People need to want your leadership and so I don't think you're going to be able to be a teacher leader for everyone in your building . . . Sometimes because they're shamed by other people being engaged and buying in to what you're doing, sometimes because your leadership and administration buys into what you're doing and then tells them they have to do it, but for the most part you have to have people want your leadership.

Considering the social justice focus of our leadership to address marginalization within the system of education, the norms of “autonomy, egalitarianism, and seniority” decried by many scholars (such as Johnson & Donaldson, 2007) were often a source of power, not an obstacle, for our teacher leadership.

Normative Gender Expression

The data also demonstrates an expectation of typical, heteronormative gender expression and appearance. Impacted by race, age, and cultural context, we had all experienced some expectation for our physical appearance as teachers. As the only teacher of color at her school, Barbara felt her professional and feminine appearance was important to establishing her authority. Ann reinforced this idea by sharing that her lack of overly feminine appearance had been a hindrance to her: “I felt like I had less legitimacy as a female authority figure to them because I didn’t represent my gender a certain way . . . [I] wasn’t wearing heels and makeup.” In fact, a student once directly questioned her sexual orientation due to her appearance. It is not clear to Ann if others made that assumption or what role that might have played in the acceptance of her authority. Diane actually experienced the opposite when she taught overseas: “I felt like I got more legitimacy because of my lack of femininity because they didn’t consider me soft. They felt like I was strong, that I wasn’t going to apologize for my disciplinary methods, my academic structure.” Several of the participants had worked with administrators who openly preferred younger teachers, possibly speaking to a gendered stereotype of feminine beauty.

“Leaky” Teacher Identity

The data highlighted the many ways in which the role of *teacher* became an all-encompassing identity even beyond the school context. The role of teacher appeared to overtake the individual’s personhood in ways that other feminized identities such as *mother* do. As women in a feminized profession, we were not afforded a personal identity separate from our professional identity. To use Griffiths’ (2006) term, the practice of teaching is indeed “leaky” in a way that masculine-gendered professions are not. The practice of teacher leadership by the participants was also “leaky,” moving fluidly between the contexts of classrooms, students, colleagues, family, community, church, etc. in both explicit and implicit ways and in contexts from the most formal to the most informal. Despite the fact that our questions and conversations were focused on our interactions with colleagues, discussion routinely went to students and/or parents. In recognizing and analyzing this phenomenon, the group highlighted the “leaky” nature of teaching.

Sherri: I think it’s kinda hard to separate our job from the students and parents because they all intertwine.

Barbara: I mean, I think that’s the purpose we’re there, and it can’t be separated, I mean if you’re working with your colleagues, the reason we’re working with your colleagues is because you’re teachers and you’re teachers because you have students.

Ann used these words:

We work in an environment where personal and professional don’t get easily departmentalized, you know . . . when you deal with the kind of subject and topics . . . it’s just too messy. This idea that we can neatly confine things into personal

and professional, I think we all know that's not realistic . . . If it was solely a professional world I'm sure that we—our choices and our actions might be a little different. But it's not, and it never will be.

Enacting Leadership in the Feminized Space of Teaching

Interestingly, we did not always conceive of this feminized space as a negative. We all expressed a preference for some aspects of working in an environment with gendered expectations. Ann and Sherri both expressed that they preferred working for women principals who engaged in a feminist approach to leadership. Sherri wrote: "In my opinion, the women were, by far, the more effective leaders . . . because they delegated." Diane expressed great frustration in her situation of serving as the department chair of an all-male department and male assistant principal assigned to her area: "I had to figure out a really different dynamic with how I was approaching leadership with them compared to leadership with a female team. I felt like I was considered a more legitimate leader with females more quickly." She described herself as feeling "stranded" and "squashed" by the situation. Diane and Ann both expressed a strong preference for working with teams that are a majority female. It would appear that a majority of the group routinely found comfort in some of the cultural norms of this feminized space.

The school environment is one of the only places where I'm not overly aware of my gender because I feel comfortable with my gender expression. I feel, you know, it's just—it's the place where I'm not immediately aware and mindful of how I'm expressing my gender. (Ann)

To practice teacher leadership in this feminized context was a balancing act for the participants. The gendered space of teaching seemed to heighten the gendered expectations that we experienced. In analyzing our enactment of teacher leadership, we felt that a key factor was the ability to be flexible and adaptable—to be a chameleon. Julie: “. . . if you look at a school like each one has, has got their own little personality and if you can’t adapt then some of the times that can mean the end of your career or a difficult time.” Barbara expressed that while she had family in other states and could make more money by moving there, she was hesitant to put the time and energy into adjusting to a new context: “I don’t want to go and have to start over and learn everything. . . it doesn’t necessarily equate to the same success and being my age, I just don’t want to do that much work.” Diane: “. . . there’s always something to go over, under, around, through that’s being thrown at teachers . . . and that whole characteristic of constant adaptation I think is, it becomes a required feature of the personalities of people who stay in teaching.”

Being supportive of colleagues is usually a valued norm that is a prerequisite for teacher leadership. However, being perceived as too *mothering* seems to lead to exclusion from leadership roles in some school cultures. Teachers must almost always break the norm of passivity to engage in teacher leadership. However, being too outspoken seemed to prevent teachers from being placed in leadership roles or their leadership being supported by administration. The expectation of heteronormative gender expression and feminine physical appearance had varying impacts on teacher leadership in our experience. In some contexts and some intersections of identity, a less

typically feminine appearance for women granted authority, in others, it undermined it. In considering my assumptions at the start of the research, I never considered that physical appearance could play such a powerful and contradictory role in the landscape of teaching. The norms of collaboration, however, seemed valued in all contexts and breaking this norm could negatively impact the ability to engage in teacher leadership.

Summary

The research group confirmed that we encountered a feminized landscape in our teaching environments similar to what is described in the literature. While in our lived experience it seems that some aspects of being a teacher are gendered feminine regardless of the gender of the teacher, what we routinely experienced was that being a woman teacher heightened the gendered expectations we experienced. We perceived that male teachers were excused from some of these expectations due to their gender. Our perception and experience was that both women and men have some expectation of support and nurturing, while the expectation for women was stronger and often extended beyond students. These expectations also varied by age and race. Our experience also showed that women teachers experienced a stronger expectation of passivity.

We perceived a strong expectation of collaboration in our teaching contexts.

Collaboration in this context involved collegiality, cooperation, teamwork, egalitarianism, and shared decision-making. The group discussed that in many cases, our male colleagues had difficulty conforming to this gendered norm. We also experienced an expectation of normative gender expression with variations and complexities based on race and context. These gendered expectations turn the practice of teacher leadership into

a balancing act between *feminine* cultural norms for *teachers* and *masculine* cultural norms for *leaders*.

Domains of Power and Teacher Leadership

In considering how teacher leadership is enacted in the context of power dynamics in schools, I used the Domains of Power framework articulated by Patricia Hill Collins (2009). The four domains of power are: structural (the organization of social institutions), disciplinary (enforcement of policy and surveillance), cultural (the myths that legitimize oppression), and interpersonal (everyday interactions). As teacher leaders negotiate power, they do so within and across these domains. All the participants describe acts of resistance within and across the domains that included direct defiance, noncompliance, and outspokenness as well as more secretive actions.

Structural Domain

Teachers work within a hierarchical system. Teachers are hired and fired and subject to the power of administrators and school boards. However, this structure actually seems to have less impact on teacher leadership than the structure of isolation. It seems that little has changed since Ella Flagg Young (1901) wrote her whole dissertation on the problem of isolation in schools. Lortie (1975) points out the deep roots of this structure from a profession that experienced high turnover, as it was often considered temporary work. The group discussions focused on the fact that within the structure of schools, teachers are isolated from each other and the work of teaching is isolated from the community and parents. This is illustrated in this conversation between Ann and Barbara:

Ann: Teachers are kind of forced into isolation, but then chastised for not having a bigger picture. I mean I don't know if you've ever had a principal come at you with "well, you just don't understand the bigger picture" and you know, it's like how can I understand the bigger picture? I don't have the opportunity to, so you're creating this problem for me and then punishing me for that problem.

Barbara: But I think with the social media is actually helping to break down those barriers so even though you may not physically be able to contribute, that if you don't even contribute on social media because that can in itself can present bigger, you are aware and I think that that helps.

As Barbara points out, engaging in resistance within this domain takes the form of coalition building, which requires skill in negotiating the interpersonal domain of power. This was one of the key elements we identified in our enactment of teacher leadership. Using the tool of shared vision, each teacher leader developed complex and wide-ranging coalitions that might include colleagues, current and former students, current and former parents, family and friends not involved in education, and educators within professional and social networks among others.

Depending on the school community that you work in, how empowered you are to be a leader beyond the community can be greatly affected and how empowered are the people around you that you can harness them in order to be effective in venues outside of your school because that's a very difficult road to try and pave just on your own . . . [it] requires not only connecting with colleagues in your own building but other buildings as well which I think teachers are really bad at.
(Diane)

In this quote, Diane highlights how teacher leadership within a school plays a role in teacher leadership beyond the school into district and community contexts. In her experience, many teachers struggle to overcome the structural obstacles to coalition building with colleagues.

Barbara also discussed the historic importance of coalition building for Black teachers and her frustrations at a new generation of teachers who do not seem to value that practice:

With the history of Black teachers, they were looked upon not only as leaders in the school but leaders in the community, like that was just standard, you would always go to the teacher . . . We're having problems just getting our teachers to come to PTSO meetings. The ones that are coming are the ones that are near my age that know that it's an important part of your duty and our younger teachers are just like "no, I'm not going to another meeting" . . . But I see it as an integral part of it. How can you be on staff and not know what the parents and the community are expecting in your school?

Julie also highlighted the structural barriers specific to the context of working in an alternative school: "We're getting the students from everywhere, so it's not that we can pinpoint that they're coming out of this community or that community . . . we get folks from all over the district, so it's just really hard." Without a centralized community to connect with, coalition building became even more challenging in this context.

Disciplinary Domain

In the disciplinary domain, teachers are subject to extensive surveillance by administrators; district, local, and state officials; and parents and students.

Administrators use the fear of firing or unpleasant working conditions to wield disciplinary power. Sherri wrote about her experience with surveillance at her school:

With recent [negative press coverage] and poor performance as well as high turnover, we are being scrutinized heavily. Most of us are just trying to teach and not cause too much ruckus. The power being wielded through both the admins [sic] and the county office is punitive. Fingers are constantly pointed at us.

In an environment of layers of constant surveillance, the group agreed that teachers must be vigilant to maintain a perception of excellence:

If you had walked in my room five minutes before you did or five minutes after you did, the perception of whether or not I was a good teacher would have been totally changed and you know, it's, it really is and I've always—when I mentor new teachers I always say your greatest asset is your reputation, and you've got to cultivate that and guard that because that makes or breaks a teacher. (Ann)

This reputation management appears to play a key role in negotiating power in the context of teacher leadership. Barbara described her experiences with surveillance as a Black woman:

For some, this is gonna be the first time that they've ever had a black teacher, so for some they've never, ever had a black teacher, so and then the content that I bring up, some of them never, ever heard of, really, she's making that up—I had one student that took his phone and Googled everything that I said and I'm sorry I ain't stopping him (*laughing*).

Barbara and Sherri also discussed how their personal situations contributed to how disciplinary power affected them:

Barbara: [other teachers] see it as a superpower sort of . . . “Aren't you worried about getting fired?” No, I don't want to lose my job, I'm not gonna put myself in that position, but this is important. I'm divorced, my daughters are grown. I live in an apartment, so I mean, I'm not worried about the mortgage . . . I can see the teachers with families, you know, they're mumbling under their breath but they're never gonna do anything because the security of their job is the utmost.

Sherri: I do have a mortgage and my stepson starts college next year and there's another one behind him . . . yes, it's a, it takes away my power in a lot of ways and I still say—I still make suggestions, and say you know, “have you thought about this, have you thought about that,” but I would probably push a lot more if I didn't have all those limitations.

Barbara was in a position in life that provided some protection against disciplinary power while Sherri was in a position that made her more vulnerable to it (although in a later group session, Barbara did mention her student loans). Specifically, they both discussed their responsibilities primarily in terms of supporting children.

However, teachers also use the power of surveillance to resist oppressive forces. Due to those “leaky” identities and complex relationships, they often have access to information that can be powerful. Gossip and inside connection can be used to gain influence with colleagues in order to engage in teacher leadership. The participants also reported using what Collins (2009) calls “counter-surveillance” to highlight and report policy and practice in schools that is ineffective or oppressive. One participant admitted once reporting her principal to state officials after observing testing practices that were unethical. Julie’s writing provides another example:

In a school setting of [lots of] ethnic minorities on staff, only one minority [person] had a leadership role. I noticed that many inexperienced majority staff members held leadership roles. I spoke with the principal about my concerns. He was very uncomfortable, and sent a minority assistant principal to speak with me on the issue. We met, and I raised my concerns. My goal was to raise awareness and for the administrative team to consider minorities for leadership positions.

Diane also provided this example:

[The principal] refused to do my final evaluation at the end of the school year, wouldn’t meet with me to do my summative, and eventually, I had to call her supervisor two weeks after school was out because my documents were never finished . . . so essentially she was forced to meet with me and write a letter acknowledging that I was an excellent teacher.

Participants also reported taking advantage of and creating opportunities for their quality practices and student successes to be observed in order to cultivate their reputation as a good teacher and gain influence. They relied on certifications, awards, honors, and student data to help legitimize their role as a teacher leader. Sherri often felt that as part of an alternative program, her colleagues did not see her as a “real” teacher until she gained an important credential: “One of the things that began to make people look at me and say ‘oh, she really is a teacher,’ is when I became National Board Certified.” At the same time, administrators use disciplinary power to choose whether or not to enforce teacher-created policy, and how to distribute or withhold resources from teachers. Sherri wrote: “The [School Improvement Team] met to update the tardy policy because our tardies are too high . . . then [the principal] never enforced it because she didn't like it.” Diane: “[The principal] reduced my ability to be a leader in our school community because she withheld resources from me.” Sherri also experienced another administrator who wielded disciplinary power by controlling the placement of classrooms:

The power that you have or don't have really is dependent a lot of times on the teaching situation, you know, not only the physical location of where you are but the actual situation . . . the alternative program that I was in that was a school within a school . . . I really think a lot of the staff upstairs as we would say, we would call it, it was affectionately referred to as the dungeon (we were in the basement) and I think a lot of them thought we just babysat kids, that we really weren't teaching, you know, we were just babysitters.

Districts and states also contribute to a flood of mandates, paperwork, and extra duties as well as engaging in frequent staff moves or reorganization that can keep teachers too busy and overwhelmed to engage in resistance behaviors.

It seems like we get a new mandate every week, and there's some other paper work drudgery that really, you know, in the scheme of things, it's not helping me be a better teacher or helping my children grow or anything beneficial for anybody. (Sherri)

We have meetings four out of five days a week because we're a small staff, we're like by October we're tired of meetings . . . and we do have to have many hats—wear many hats. (Barbara)

Finally, Ann described a context where disciplinary power was directly related to physical power:

The administration was not effective and so the building actually felt kind of unsafe a lot of times, and so kind of the big, burly, coach guys ended up wielding a lot of power and influence because they were the ones physically, sometimes, taking care of the discipline issues . . . Order was being kept by these guys and it was just, it was really frustrating to see how that suddenly gave them so much influence and power just based on their, who they were, their physical size and the fact that they were male.

Cultural Domain

In the cultural domain, teachers face media portrayals and popular perception of teachers and schools in general as well as the cultural assumption surrounding the students they teach. All the participants had, at some point in their careers, worked primarily with students of color and/or disadvantaged students. With the “leaky” nature of teacher identity, teachers of poor students or students of color were often include in such cultural assumptions—a process Collins (2009) coins “social blackness.” Being

associated with lower class students or students of color could impact the ability of the teacher to enact teacher leadership in district or community settings. As teacher leaders, we often faced assumptions and expectations based on identity factors such as gender, race, age, class (often meaning the class of the students we taught), and cultural identity. When faced with such assumptions and expectations, the data reveals that we often chose to ignore or avoid addressing those assumptions, to *play to* expectations when advantageous, and/or *play against* negative assumptions. In enacting teacher leadership, individual participants often had to address cultural myths that lead people to believe that women and people of color cannot be effective leaders.

Race. In negotiating the cultural domain of power, the participants (both Black and White) sometimes simultaneously *played to*, *played against*, and *ignored* assumptions based on race. The participants also demonstrated their own assumptions placed on others based on race. Barbara was surprised to see leadership thrust upon her based on her minority status:

The assumption is that you can make connections to other students that your colleagues can't, that propels you to be a teacher leader, whether you want to or not, or whether that assumption is based on stereotypes . . . When I was first hired at this school, I was the only teacher of color on staff, and . . . the assumption that the Black teacher can deal with all of the African-American students because they're Black and propelling that person into that leadership role even though that's not necessarily true that that person has the skills or the desire to be in that role.

However, she also felt that her minority status meant that she was held to higher expectations and must “play against” assumptions of her incompetence. She wrote:

When I was at a charter school when the majority of the staff looked like me then my skills seemed to be the factor that propelled me to leadership skills . . . when I moved I was the only teacher of color at that time, I think my race was a factor of defining what I was able to do or expected to do . . . I got the feeling that I had to prove my expertise over and over again. Students would question my ability and go to other staff with their concern. Faculty would hardly speak to me or speak down to me . . . The second year was easier, but I feel that a White teacher in the same situation would not have had as difficult of a time.

Julie has worked in schools where she was one of a few teachers of color and at schools where the staff was largely minority. She described that working with a large number of Black colleagues created an environment that felt more collaborative and more connected to the community. When working with predominately White students, staff, and parents, she often found the relationship more adversarial, especially with parents who often seemed to question her practices. There are other assumptions based on race that Barbara reported having to play against:

I think part of it is just acknowledging, okay, people, I'm Black, I mean really, literally saying it (*laughing*) . . . I'm Black and I'm female and acknowledge that . . . me being in the room changes the conversation. Even if I'm sitting there and don't say one single word, my presence changes because something that was going to be said may not have been said.

In openly addressing the affect her race and gender had on her colleagues, Barbara shifted the focus from her expectations and assumptions to those of her all White colleagues. At the same time, she also found it useful to sometimes *play to* her colleagues' expectations:

If you do one of those Black women moves—they just like go off, but I mean sometimes you just have to take it there . . . I tell them, you want me to go there, I will go there, but it's not necessarily all encompassed of who I am.

In another session, Barbara shared that she appreciated that stereotypes of her as a middle-aged Black woman spared her from what she considered unnecessary and annoying socializing at work:

They chose not to get to know me, and that's fine . . . I don't want to hang out with a bunch of 20-year-olds talking about their babies because I don't care . . . I just came to do my job.

Julie expressed that others' perceptions led her to carefully reflect on her actions as a teacher leader. She wrote:

Some people have preconceived ideas about what to expect in interacting with African-American females. In my decision-making, I take time to reflect and consider many perspectives before taking action. If I feel very strongly about a topic or an incident, then I will take time to consider how to proceed.

Diane expressed that she felt "completely shut out of everything" when the rest of her department and her principal were all Black women. While she did have other more positive experiences working with Black women, she expressed these concerns:

Those two Black female principals had very sensitive egos . . . and while I love encouraging women to positions of leadership, I'm so excited to be working for a biracial man who doesn't feel threatened by me, who talks to me in seeking my opinion, in feeling like my experience is worthwhile, and it's just a very different dynamic.

Diane's statement seems to imply that she expects both her race and gender and the race and gender of the administrator to play a role their interactions, although the nature of the impact could not necessarily be predicted or expected.

Ann, Sherri, and Diane all worked in situations where others assumed that because they were White, they were unlikely to succeed in teaching students of color:

When the principalship changed, her beliefs about a White teacher being effective as a teacher of black students really changed my work environment and my ability to be a leader within the environment and she directly said to me that she didn't feel that I could be an effective leader for students of color as a White individual. Again, I think while it was a very painful experience, it was also something that made me more conscious of my privilege . . . I had to be a teacher leader in that I had to, to leave. (Diane)

In sharing this experience, it was obvious that it was indeed quite painful for Diane and still quite raw even several years later. The experience made her aware that her White privilege had ensured that her input and expertise were valued in most contexts and she was surprised and insulted when that wasn't the case. Sherri:

[The assistant principal] was well aware that I had worked in some pretty rural, pretty homogenous schools. He told me . . . that he initially thought I was a young, naive, White girl who knew nothing about and wouldn't be able to relate to kids of color.

Ann discussed in her writing how she saw a "subtle shift in who seemed to have influence in the school" when a Black female principal replaced two long-serving White male principals. She wrote: "Some minority teachers expressed for the first time (at least publicly) they had felt that their voices were not heard under the previous administrations."

Class. Julie: "Who your daddy is, who your momma knows, plays a huge role, played a very huge role in some of the environments where I worked." As Julie points out, class strata play a role in schools, both for students and teachers, and can impact how

teacher leaders negotiate power. Given the “leaky” nature of teacher identity, teachers are often placed in the same social strata as their disadvantaged students. Sherri’s current school is locked in a community debate about whether to shut it down and redistrict, an effort supported by some privileged families now stuck in what had become a high poverty attendance zone. This discussion between Ann and Julie explores the role of class in teacher leadership:

Ann: I see that in what teachers have some influence at a district level when things like committees and when stuff gets planned and they need expertise, there’s certain schools that they tend to try to pull people from, again, along those same line, this school has a particular reputation, but generally it boils down to socioeconomic factors a school has this reputation simply because it has the good kids.

Julie: And it seems like without fail sometimes that’s just automatically where they will go as if there’s nothing, no other excellence that anywhere else, so yeah, I’ve seen that in several districts.

It would appear that teachers associated with disadvantaged students and schools were often left out of leadership opportunities because of that association.

Gender. In addition to the previously mentioned gendered expectations of teaching of nurturing, passivity, collaboration, feminine gender expression, and monolithic identity, all of the participants expressed great frustration at routinely having to play against expectations that as women we were “emotional,” “irrational,” “bitchy,” “dramatic,” or “flighty.” Ann explored this frustration in her writing:

I had a White male principal for a long time who engaged in a subtle, polite southern gentlemen type of patronizing. He would always try to “calm me down” or wonder why I was upset, etc. . . . I find it is easier to work for female administrators who don’t seem as likely to dismiss emotion as irrational.

Diane while discussing a conflict with a colleague:

I'm not sure how to negotiate it at all now, and I know that continuing to be angry about it is only gonna further the problem because then I'm gonna get framed as, you know, 'that bitchy girl on the hall.' (*sarcastic tone*)

Diane felt that as a woman, she could not address the unprofessional actions of a colleague directly without being subject to a negative gender stereotype. All the participants expressed frustration that they were not allowed to express anger as a woman without the risk of being negatively labeled. Along with "emotional," the participants often dealt with the expectation that they would be "soft." Julie found that her administration expected her to be upset that they took drastic action on a student discipline issue when in fact, Julie had been frustrated by the lack of administrative action and agreed with the harsh approach. She expressed her frustration at the narrow expectations she experienced: "It's almost as if you show any sort of, you know, that you actually have a heartbeat . . . that you're totally this pushover or perceived that way, I guess." Ann found it difficult to work with some male administrators who were uncomfortable with her direct, aggressive approach with them.

I had a couple, especially Black male administrators, that I really had difficulty working with because I think, it's like they didn't know what to do with someone who was not easily classified, because I'm not feminine enough . . . and so they didn't know what to do with a straight White woman who acted the way I did.

In all of our experience we had to *play against* these assumptions or simply avoid those who seemed unable to be persuaded otherwise. The participants often found that these expectations could be roadblocks to enacting leadership and negotiating power.

Age. Most of the participants also had experiences with expectations related to age, which in almost all cases they chose to ignore or avoid. Julie, Barbara, and Sherri had all worked for administrators who openly favored young teachers for employment and leadership roles (specifically young *White* teachers). Barbara perceived that a Black woman principal she once worked for showed this favoritism. Julie had experienced the same:

The young, the White, right out of school, just, I mean—that was what [the principal] valued, who she valued, and if you were—had more than five years she wanted something, you know, she wanted you to be gone.

This preference surprised both Barbara and Julie. They seem to have expected a Black woman principal to acknowledge some solidarity with Black women teachers and demonstrate respect for elders. Instead, it seems that some Black women principals felt being associated with other Black women could undermine her slim and hard-won authority. The preference for young White teacher in some contexts may be related to gendered stereotypes of teachers, of feminine beauty, and/or of Black women as “difficult.” On the other hand, Ann, Diane, and Barbara had experienced contexts where increased age seemed to bestow leadership. Barbara wrote:

I feel that age is a factor in my perception of leadership. Starting to teach near the age of forty, I come into the classroom looking like I have more educational experience and the tendency to look at mature people as some type of leadership skills.

At the same time, Ann wrote about how a similar context limited her ability to be a leader:

There was a small contingent of “old guard” teachers who were literally “founding fathers” and had worked at the school since it opened. These folks seemed to wield a large amount of power and influence based solely on that fact . . . That was very frustrating as a young teacher.

Diane once had a principal who refused to give any teacher with less than 25 years of experience the highest marks on evaluation forms. Barbara was able to *play to* the assumption that she had leadership skills based solely on her age, while Ann was unable to *play against* the culture that valued experience and instead choose build relationship and allying herself with the “old guard,” and Diane eventually left her position partly because of her principal’s refusal to recognize her ability. Ann eventually left her school in part because of her frustration with her colleagues.

Discussion. Participants most frequently discussed *playing against* issues of race, gender and gender expression, and class. Issues related to age were most frequently ignored. Race was also frequently mentioned in a context of being *played to*. Many intersections of race, class, and gender played a role in these negotiations of power. Ann and Julie both described experiences of working with colleagues originally from other countries which further complicated navigating the cultural domain because the cultural expectations were very different. Most interestingly, when analyzing the data it appears while teacher leadership meant being adaptable and a bit of a chameleon, we rarely seemed to alter our performance of race or gender identity to address issues in the cultural domain of power. Barbara articulated it this way:

I knew that’s what it was going to—what I was gonna do and so I don’t see how, I don’t feel that I changed. I think it’s the perception of who they thought that I was. Because for some, this is gonna be the first time that they’ve ever had a

Black teacher and I teach history . . . I know that I'm gonna get a lot of push back . . . you've been told this one thing for 14, 15 years and now you've got this woman that's coming in and saying that what I thought was true, what my family believed is true is not true . . . I'd say I burst their bubbles. So I know coming in that's what I have to face, so I don't see it as an adjustment for me, I see it as an adjustment for the people that I teach with.

She perceived not that she adjusted her performance of race but that she helped those around her adjust their perceptions and assumptions. In the “leakiness” of teacher identity, she was guiding students and colleagues to a new understanding of racial identity. Diane echoed a similar experience:

I kind of had the unique experience of being the only White teacher . . . in my school for a really long time and . . . I think that really benefitted me when I came back to the States . . . I had really learned how important the investment of that relationship was for me in order to get my students on board with me and I frequently had students who talked to me about how they hadn't had positive experiences with White teachers in the past and we were able to have a lot of very both uncomfortable and productive discussions about issues of race in my class because of the experiences I've had that I felt more comfortable with delving into those things.

Instead of altering her performance of race, she worked to build relationships with students that countered their negative experiences and expectations of White teachers. Similarly, even though Ann found her lack of feminine gender expression a hindrance, she did not make an attempt to alter her gender expression but chose to encourage others to alter their perceptions and expectations. The complexity and “leakiness” of teacher leadership means that when faced with an obstacle to enacting leadership or resisting oppressive power, we chose to find another of the many available sources of power (or

change the context by changing schools, districts, positions, grade levels, etc.) rather than alter our performance of identity beyond a level of comfort.

Interpersonal Domain

The lived experiences of the teacher leaders in this study would suggest that it is within the interpersonal domain of power that much of the enactment of teacher leadership happens. To overcome the structural obstacles to power, the power of surveillance, and the expectations found in the cultural domain, the participants relied on relationship building and use of networks within the complex and “leaky” landscape of teaching, cultivating a reputation of excellence, developing a shared vision, and skillful communication as key activities in the necessary process of coalition building.

Both Julie and Sherri reported struggling to develop relationships as teachers in communities where they were considered outsiders: Julie: “If you weren’t from there or an adjacent county, I mean it was suspect, it was like you are—you might as well have been from Mars.”

I was not from that little town and parents actually, you know, said things like that. “You think you’re better than everybody because you’re from the big city” . . . [they] threatened to follow me home down the interstate so they could, you know, argue with me. (Sherri)

They both eventually left these schools in part because they were unable to overcome the perception of being outsiders. On the other hand, Barbara expressed how teaching in the community she grew up in contributed to her ability to build coalitions:

It does give you that connection, okay, I know this person on the school board, and this person on the school board was my high school history teacher . . . so I

know that if I have a issue or if I have a problem that there's someone that I can go that will actually listen to me.

Julie expressed that she felt her race created obstacles to her leadership and that relationship building was the key to addressing these. She felt that relationships with her White colleagues required a higher threshold of trust and she worked within the interpersonal domain to establish this. Julie seemed resigned to the fact that establishing relationships with White colleagues would take more effort, time, and trust. When another participant pushed the issue and asked Julie how she felt about this fact this was her response:

No one's ever asked me that before (*stunned look and a bit of a pause*). I think it just comes with the terrain, with just over time, I mean that's just what I've done. Getting to know people . . . it's something that has to be worked on and established and it doesn't come easily, it doesn't come quickly a lot of the times and well, some it doesn't, there's always the second guessing, so. It's sad, but I mean, you just get used to it.

As a new teacher, Barbara reported feeling intimidated by her mostly White, male peers and at a loss as to how to connect. Now with ten years of experience, she feels she has found a confident voice and established relationships that allow her to be comfortable using it:

Nine times out of ten my colleagues are going to be White males . . . I definitely was intimidated . . . and not having that voice at the beginning because I was usually the only female and definitely usually the only Black female in a space and . . . now I can see the difference with me that taking more of what I need to get what I need, whether it's speaking up or whether it's being silent because sometimes, it's, you know which battles to fight . . .

Yet, she still finds working at a small school where the staff tends to be close to be a challenge:

I have to embrace it more whether I want to or not just because it is so small, and it does seep over, because we do have to wear so many different hats at the school and we do have to spend so much time there and I may not be comfortable but for me to be effective that's something that I have to engage with and actually learn how to do it so that's a leader because you have to be able to see things in those different perspectives.

Julie agreed that she preferred to have more clearly established boundaries than her White peers do:

I'm in a small environment too and I feel like some of the times when I'm trying to establish the boundaries that it's kind of like "well, what are you doing that for?" They just kind of want to do what they want to do when they want to do it, and just have it all flow and it just gets crazy and messy.

Both of these comments can be interpreted as an expression of frustration with the asserted White privilege to create and maintain the rules of engagement to their own comfort and preference, regardless of their Black colleagues' discomfort.

Diane also spoke of her conscious efforts as a White teacher to establish relationships with her mostly minority students and their families:

I think people need to understand, as teachers, that privilege impacts how your students may perceive or interact with you, and that you have to be conscious of that, that you have to frame things in your classroom and in a way that opens up opportunities for students to relate to you, that you have to make specific efforts to learn about cultural differences and a student's home environment, their upbringing, and that without bridging some of those gaps the learning opportunities decrease.

Ann expressed her approach to relationship building this way:

You spend so much time with these people, both students and colleagues, and engage in such emotional, deep stuff, I don't understand people who don't form strong relationships in that situation. But you still have to be open to those relationships and you still have to nurture them . . . you have to be willing to make yourself vulnerable enough to do it.

In this quote we see Ann expressing her personal belief that vulnerability can be a source of power, not a lack of it. At the same time, she wrote about the fact that some of her personal connections provided her with inside information and “information is also a powerful tool in gaining influence with peers.” It would appear that the study participants used a wide variety of context specific techniques in relationship building, both personal and practical.

Summary

In the structural domain, the teacher leaders found the structural isolation to be a powerful obstacle to enacting leadership for social justice. We engaged in resistance in this domain of power by coalition building within our complex and intricate interpersonal networks. In the disciplinary domain, the teacher leaders resisted oppressive forces through both avoiding surveillance and using counter-surveillance. We also perceived the disciplinary drowning of teachers with mandates, paperwork, and extra duties as a powerful force against the work of social justice by teacher leaders. In our work as teacher leaders, we negotiated the cultural domain of power in regards to race, class, gender, and age and the intersections between those identity factors. In negotiating power in this domain, we often *played to*, *played against*, and/or *ignored* the cultural

expectations imposed on us. Looking at the data gathered in this study, it appears that within the interpersonal domain of power much of the practice of teacher leadership resides. Negotiating power within the interpersonal domain created the coalitions that helped overcome structural isolation and combat the negative assumptions experienced in the cultural domain.

Chapter Discussion

The collective analysis of our lived experiences as well as analysis of the data produced provided insight into the research questions. In considering how teacher leadership is defined, it was clear that differing paradigms are at play. All the women teachers in this study placed their teaching and leadership within a social justice context and a review of literature suggests that many other teachers (women teachers, and specifically Black women teachers) are likely to as well. Many scholars and policymakers, however, seem to approach teacher leadership from a paradigm that is more aligned with managerial concerns and is implicitly or explicitly opposed to the work of social justice. In considering how we negotiated power in our enactment of teacher leadership, we identified structural isolation as our greatest obstacle, leading us to focus our practice of teacher leadership on relationship development and coalition building. These coalitions were wide-ranging and complex. While we are routinely subject to surveillance and the threat of disciplinary power, we also found many ways to avoid surveillance, to use surveillance to cultivate our reputations, and/or use counter-surveillance in engaging in teacher leadership.

In the cultural domain of power, we considered how the landscape of our teaching environment was feminized. It appeared that the feminine-gendered nature of the work heightened the gendered expectations we experienced as women. We reported experiencing gendered expectations of nurturing, passivity, collaboration, normative gender expression, and monolithic identities. While it appeared to us that our male colleagues were excused from some of these expectations, collaboration is a strong cultural norm for teachers of both genders in the teaching environments we had experienced. In yet another paradox, while collaboration was a strong cultural norm, the structural isolation was as well. It seems that collaboration that contributed to organizational efficiency and aligned with hegemonic concerns was encouraged while structural and disciplinary barriers were in place to discourage collaboration in resistance to the established hegemony. In the cultural domain of power, the group routinely experienced expectations based on race, gender, age, and class (relating to the students taught) and complex intersections of those categories. Expectations based on age were surprising and contradictory with experience being a hindrance in many school contexts. Enacting teacher leadership in this landscape required flexibility and adaptability.

However, the data suggest that this group of teacher leaders chose not to modify their identity performance beyond their personal comfort level. Instead, they chose to tap one of the many other sources of power available to them in the complex environment of teaching, to educate students and colleagues about their oppressive assumptions, or simply to find a more conducive environment. It was surprising to see how frequently the group members changed (or considered changing) schools, districts, or

departments/grade levels when faced with obstacles to leadership they felt they could not overcome. It is quite easy to view teacher leadership through the myth of the hero-leader whose leadership is built upon long-suffering dedication and force of character. As a researcher, I had certainly been influenced by these conceptions in the literature. Instead, I found that teacher leaders engaged often in shrewd maneuvers in the negotiation of power.

It was not the context that allowed us to be leaders, but our own desire for self-actualization that led us to find an environment conducive to our leadership. Given the choice of drastically changing our performance of identity or changing settings to successfully engage in leadership, we chose to change settings. Based on our discussions, the bulk of the negotiating of power necessary to engage in teacher leadership was classified in the interpersonal domain. Our experiences suggest that previous literature has not properly highlighted the multiple unresolved paradoxes that face teacher leaders or intricacy and “leakiness” of the variety of connections and interactions among teachers, students, parents, colleagues, and the community. Within this landscape of complex, intertwined relationships, we worked to build connections, often *playing against* negative cultural myths in the process. In Chapter V, I will explore the conclusions and recommendations that can be drawn from this richer understanding of the negotiation of power by teacher leaders.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Study Summary

The research questions explored in this dissertation originated in the incongruity of the literature and my own lived experience as a teacher leader. A critical examination of the literature highlighted that this incongruity was partly a result of the failure of the literature to consider the complexities of power as conceptualized by feminist theory, the social justice impulse behind much of what teacher leaders do, the intersectional identity of teacher leaders, and the feminized landscape in which teachers work. Using a collaborative autoethnographic approach, a group of teacher leaders critically examined their practices of teacher leadership within this context. Through this methodology, we engaged in self-reflection and group inquiry.

In considering how teacher leadership is being defined and by whom, a critical look at the body of literature suggests that the conceptualizing of teacher leadership is being driven by policymakers, often in an attempt to champion a particular paradigm and vision of public schooling. In considering how the feminized space of teaching impacts teacher leadership, we reported experiencing feminine-gendered expectations in our teaching contexts of support/nurturing, passivity, collaboration, normative gender expression, and all-encompassing teacher identity. Practicing teacher leadership in this gendered environment was a balancing act that required the ability to be a “chameleon.”

We had to embrace the “leakiness” and complexity of teaching, negotiate expectations of our feminine appearance, meet gendered expectations of caring and nurturing, and cultivate the appearance of selfless and morally righteous motivation to our leadership actions.

While we were flexible in many ways, we almost never chose to modify our performance of identity factors such as race and gender, even when negative assumptions based on these factors were obstacles to our leadership. In considering the question of our intersectional identity and its impact on our teacher leadership practice, we found the complexity of teaching and intricate nature of connections and networks allowed us to pick and choose a variety of strategies and resources with which to negotiate around negative assumptions, take advantage of positive assumptions, or simply avoid the issue and find another source of power from which to draw. In many cases, we sought a more conducive context to our leadership. Considering the critical feminist understanding of power as both multidirectional and multifaceted, we found that much of the work of teacher leadership involves negotiating the interpersonal and cultural domains of power in order to develop coalitions of diverse stakeholders to resist the oppressive forces found in the structural and disciplinary domains.

Key Considerations to Inform Teacher Leadership Practice

It is clear that much research on teacher leadership fails to place teacher leadership within a post-structuralist and critical feminist understanding of the dynamics of power. Teachers negotiate complex power dynamics every day, which are made more complex by the “leakiness” of teacher work in the lives of teachers. They do so while

facing the assumptions that come with their gender and gender expression, race, age, class, and other identity factors within a context of the many feminized expectations of the teaching environment. The analogy of the earth used as conceptual map presented in Chapter II is useful to conceive of a complex, dynamic, and interwoven system. Teacher leadership practice is nested inside the overlapping spaces of intersectional identity, feminized expectations of teaching, and hegemonic masculinity of the larger society. The boundaries between these areas are often “leaky” and “viscous.” Within this system, power flows through these spaces and through the interconnected structural, disciplinary, cultural, and interpersonal domains. Like the earth’s magnetic field, that flow of power is impacted by its passage through those various domains or realms.

The assumption inherent in the discussion contained in this chapter is that strategic and successful negotiation of power by teachers in resistance to the systemic oppression within the school setting and larger societal context is desirable. Schools, students, communities, and society as a whole would benefit from an increase in the ability of teachers to engage in this form of teacher leadership. Many scholars seem to conceive of the absence of teacher leadership as they choose to define it as simply a vacuum. Of course, that is simply not the case. It is both more accurate and more useful to conceive of teacher leadership as strategic and/or successful negotiation of power by the teacher *in the service of social justice as the teacher understands it*. Socially just practice in this case refers to challenging oppressive forces as they affect both students *and teachers*.

The recommendations and conclusions here are for teachers and researchers as well as those in teacher education, education policy, teacher professional development, and educational leadership who wish to increase the capacity for teacher leadership defined in these terms. One place to start is in reflective practice. Specifically in the field of educational leadership where school and district administrators are developed, critical reflection on current practices and beliefs regarding teacher leadership and the practice of social justice is overdue (Collay, 2006). Teacher leaders can also benefit greatly from a collaborative reflective process. All the participants in this study reported that engaging in this self-reflective and collaborative process focused on their teacher leadership work was insightful and contributed to our networking and coalition building. We all felt that the insights gained would lead to more effective practices as teacher leaders.

It also made me think of choosing which leadership roles I want to be in and what, which leadership roles are thrust upon me, and if that's the case then how do I handle that or should handle that or, I mean it's just more thought provoking on the leadership part. (Barbara)

This has been a good opportunity for me to have some time to reflect on a lot of these concepts . . . [I intend to] make a more conscious effort to talk with other people about what's going on, to get some of those outside supports. (Diane)

It is good . . . to know that this is happening elsewhere, and it's not just me in this isolated situation. (Karen)

Beyond more informed self-reflection, those wishing to foster teacher leadership in themselves and others must expand their understanding of teacher leadership to include the social justice nature of the work of teacher leaders. The context of teacher leadership

is a complex system in which all stakeholders both contribute to and resist oppressive forces—social justice must be considered as an aim for all, not just students. The feminized norms that teachers work in must also be explored, not for the purposes of “correcting” them, but to understand the feminist practices that populate the landscape of teaching and to align the work of teacher leadership to them. Specifically, we must deconstruct the “crab bucket” metaphor and reconstruct a more inclusive understanding of the phenomenon. Strategies for teacher leadership must also recognize the astoundingly intricate web of relationships that teachers work within and provide teachers with skills and tools to better navigate this web. Space and time must also be found to allow teachers to build coalitions and collaborate with a variety of stakeholders.

Teacher Leadership as Social Justice Work

The research presented here is just part of a growing body of literature that directly connects teacher leadership with the work of social justice. All five of the study participants expressed a social justice focus to their teacher leadership work. Much more research needs to be done to understand the practice of real world teacher leaders in resistance to the oppressive forces faced both by their students and themselves. A majority of those practicing teacher leadership are women, and as Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) demonstrate, women leaders tend to have a strong social justice focus to their work. Other scholars have documented even stronger socially just practices for Black women education leaders (Grimes, 2005; Robinson & Baber, 2013). Nolan and Palazzolo’s (2011) sample of 330 teachers overwhelmingly expressed strong desire to engage in teacher leadership focused on social justice issues for students. However, they

also expressed hesitation to engage in such work either from fear for their untenured jobs or from a perceived lack of skills to do so.

While many teachers may only have a nascent understanding of systems of power and oppression, they are often motivated by a general desire for improved outcomes for students and often possess some intuitive understanding of said systems. Often people can recognize oppression in one context, especially a personal one, but not necessarily in other contexts. The lack of a clearly articulated understanding of power and oppression as defined by scholars is also not a vacuum as the body of literature often assumes. There is a continuum of understanding and of articulation of these ideas. There appears to be a wide gulf between theory and practice in the realm of social justice in education and in leadership, at least in part because of the failure to fully recognize this continuum of understanding. Also, some education reformers seem to believe that the needs of students and the needs of teachers are in opposition to one another.

Educational leaders often see their role as to *hold teachers accountable* and ensure that *students come first* and may even see socially just practice as a leader requiring an oppositional stance to teachers as they too are part of the system of oppression (Wasonga, 2009). Freirean ideology would contend that this is a false dichotomy (Freire, 1993, 2005). Freire believed that teachers and students (and even educational leaders) must live and move in both solidarity and dialogue with each other and fight the same oppressive forces. Or as Margaret Haley put it her 1904 speech to the NEA: “There is no possible conflict between the interest of the child and the interest of the teacher” (as cited in Hlavacik, 2012, p. 510).

As a part of a larger hegemonic system, teachers and administrators engage in resistance both *for* and *against* oppression, even when both have socially just aims to their work. Students themselves may even be providing resistance *for* oppression and a focus on their needs in some contexts contributes to the oppression of teachers who actually may have less privilege. The discussion of social justice responsibilities to those other than students is markedly missing from the body of literature on educational leadership for social justice. As North (2008) puts it, “the university, like schools, needs to democratize its social relations and recognize the efforts and commitment of all educational actors” (p. 1201).

Understanding the Landscape of Teacher Leadership Work

I entered this research imagining a bit of a chicken and egg problem—is teacher leadership gendered feminine because of the socialization of the mostly women who engage in it or does the feminized space of teaching force teachers to engage in leadership in gendered ways? The answer is, of course, both. However, the data gathered suggests that it is the nature of teacher work (with its deep and sometimes subtle roots in feminine gendered expectations) that has the greater impact on how teachers successfully negotiate power than personal identity factors and socialization. With the complexity of teaching, negotiating around obstacles in the cultural and interpersonal domain presented us with less challenge than the structural and disciplinary domains.

Perhaps the largest impact of the feminized space of teaching on teacher leadership is in the continual framing of teacher leadership as selfless and altruistic. The teachers in this study routinely framed their leadership actions in the context of what was

best for students and being motivated by care and concern for students. A careful analysis, however, demonstrated that our motives were often multifaceted, complex, and considerate of our own best interests. It appears that we had skillfully learned how to frame our teacher leadership in terms of serving students in order to be successful. Leadership actions perceived to be for personal gain violate the feminized norms of school cultures and community expectations.

A successful form of leadership for teachers must be aligned with the nature of teacher work and the flow of power within and between domains. Leadership practices and approaches that are not congruent with the dynamics of power in the teaching context would be less effective. At the same time, part of teacher leadership should involve taking critical stance toward and challenging the status quo that places teachers in their place within this power structure. This should be considered in the creation of programs to develop teacher leaders. More importantly, to develop teacher leaders, we must facilitate their understanding of the dynamics of power in the context of schools. The Domains of Power framework from Patricia Hill Collins (2009) has much potential as a very accessible and applicable tool. Researchers and administrators must consider the cultural norms, feminized landscape of the teaching environment, and intersectionality of teacher identity when examining teacher leadership practice.

The research presented here also calls into question some of the many resources designed to tell principals and district leaders how to facilitate, encourage, or create school cultures conducive to teacher leadership. Even many models of distributed and democratic leadership actually reinforce hegemonic forces, not challenge them (Lumby,

2013). To make matters worse, real world practice seems poorly aligned with theory (Capper & Young, 2014; Theoharis, 2007; Wasonga, 2009). Changing some aspects of school culture is unlikely to change the deeper and stronger effects of the structural and disciplinary domains of power. Truly encouraging teacher leadership means that the hierarchical and hegemonic structure of schools must act outside of its own best interest, a most unlikely proposition.

The teacher leaders who participated in the research did not choose to engage in leadership simply because someone allowed or encouraged us to. Leadership to us was part of the process of self-actualization. We pursued leadership even when the environment was not conducive but also changed our teaching context when we perceived too many obstacles to our leadership. Again, on the surface we tied these moves to our commitment to students:

Diane: If you see that personalities are going to prevent you from doing the best that you can for your students and being the best educator that you can be, then it is leadership to find an environment where you're going to be utilized to the fullest of your potential. And hopefully even appreciated for that!

Sherri: Like you said, leadership starts in your classroom with kids . . . if you're not able to be that leader at that classroom level, you can't be effective, you cannot be that leader elsewhere if you're not okay right there.

Barbara: And to be a good leader, you have to know when not to bang your head against a wall.

Julie: And not to mention your physical and you know, mental, the mental piece, you've got to take care of yourself before you can really be an advocate for others.

Ann: I think if we were men, our leaving one context for another would be painted as strategic, but because we are all women, it is perceived as taking the easy way out.

Looking under the surface of our socialized selfless responses, however, we began to see again more complex motives to our actions.

Collinson (2012) conducted a study of 81 teacher leaders and found that their leadership developed as a byproduct of their passion for learning and a deep commitment to student learning. Through my self-reflection, it became clear that I too preferred teacher leadership to administrative leadership in part because of the greater intellectual challenge. While the author did not explore any connections to social justice in this commitment to student learning, this research provides more evidence of deep, intrinsic motivations for teacher leaders. All teachers negotiate power every day; the real question is can we help teachers do so more strategically, successfully, and skillfully for the purposes of social justice? If so, how can we do this?

Complexity, Intricacy, and “Leakiness” of Teaching

This finding is of great importance. A rich understanding of the truly convoluted nature of the various relationships teachers engage in is missing in the literature on teacher leadership. This complexity must be understood first in order to understand how power moves within and between the domains. The insight found in this research is that the complexity and “leakiness” of teachers’ work allows teacher leaders to pick and choose from a wide variety of sources of power, tools, and approaches when they are faced with obstacles to their leadership. The research presented here suggests that the primary obstacle to teacher leadership is structural and disciplinary isolation and the primary activity of teacher leadership is relationship and coalition building.

To build teacher capacity for coalition building, teachers and researchers both must grasp this complexity and develop a holistic understanding of the web of relationships surrounding teachers. It is problematic that many models of teacher leadership simplify these issues into simply building relationships. It is unlikely that advice on how to build relationships with parents will help a teacher understand how to build a relationship with a parent that is also a colleague at her school and whose husband is also her husband's boss and her son's little league coach. This kind of nuance is not easy to address. Teacher leadership development must focus on the soft skills needed to navigate complex relationships with adults, something that has been traditionally lacking in teacher training and professional development. The "leakiness" of teacher leadership practice and the nebulous and non-positional nature of teacher leadership means that simply adopting such strategies from literature on educational leadership and administration is not ideal.

Resistance within the Structural and Disciplinary Domains of Power

The research presented here would suggest that much of the work of teacher leadership happens as teachers negotiate power within the interpersonal and cultural domains of power. It would appear they must do so in order to build the coalitions necessary to negotiate around the obstacles in the structural and disciplinary domain. The group of teacher leaders who participated in this research identified their greatest obstacles as isolation found mostly in the structural domain and *bureaucratic drowning* found in the disciplinary domain. Teachers need real time and mental space to focus on the work of teacher leadership for social justice. Diane explained it very simply: "they

keep us too busy.” Radical changes must be made to the structure of school buildings, teacher time, and district and school hierarchical structure in order for teachers to more effectively engage in teacher leadership. Mandates and paperwork must be reduced and the teacher accountability movement must also be held at bay. Teacher leaders must develop skills of counter-surveillance to help solve the problem that “teachers are pushed to accept a remarkable degree of personal accountability, in the face of a remarkable lack of accountability on the part of the school that employs them” (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 13).

In the absence of these changes, school leaders and policymakers must work to provide real opportunities for networking and coalition building among teachers. Professional Learning Communities, the default collaboration model in schools today, is insufficient in its limited focus on narrowly defined student achievement and in practice is often far too prescribed to be effective. It is “teacher cultural norms” that are often cited as barriers to collaboration—ironic considering that this study reinforces other literature in demonstrating the strong cultural norm of collaboration in the teaching environment. However, a closer examination of the domains of power reveals that the real culprits are more likely structural and disciplinary barriers as well as a lack of ability at negotiating power in the cultural and interpersonal realms. Teachers can also take advantage of social media to build their coalitions and networks. The potential of anonymity through the internet provides resistance to the disciplinary power of surveillance.

Problematizing the “Crab Bucket”

The norms of “autonomy, egalitarianism, and seniority” are decried by many scholars of teacher leadership in such terms as limiting “the exchange of good ideas among colleagues,” suppressing “efforts to recognize expert teaching,” and capping “a school’s instructional quality far below its potential” (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007, p. 13). Future research should be focused on understanding the complex and contradictory role that feminized norms play in teacher leadership and the ways intersectionality affects this dynamic. The issue appears to be rooted in varying paradigms. A paradigm that often sees teachers as an obstacle to school reform, that sees the needs of students and teachers in opposition to each other, and/or values hierarchical power relationships would place the egalitarianism in the category of obstacle. The hegemonic vision of leadership is that of individual power and success while this study demonstrates that teacher leadership is often executed through the power of coalition building and collaboration.

However, a paradigm focused on socially just practice that sees the school and district hierarchy, structure, and practices as part of larger systems of oppression and teacher leadership as resistance to those forces can find strength and solidarity in egalitarianism. The ideals of egalitarianism and leadership need not be mutually exclusive. The participants in this study had experienced the “crab bucket” as both an obstacle and a source of power. Perhaps we should consider that in this analogy, the crabs do not perceive that the bucket puts them in danger. The bucket also protects them from natural predators. With the outcome unknown, strength is to be found in numbers.

In our experience, teacher leadership that was perceived to be motivated by the needs of students, built on excellent classroom practice, and executed through collaboration and coalition building was overwhelmingly encouraged and supported by our colleagues. Margolis and Doring (2013) have produced a study that begins to explore this question. Their study examines why teachers choose to engage or withdraw from the work of formal teacher leaders. They found that under the right conditions, teachers strongly encouraged and supported the work of teacher leaders. These conditions were based on the teachers' interpretations of how the teacher leader maintained personal and professional integrity and the procedural and distributed justice involved in the work of the teacher leader.

The Teacher Leader as Chameleon

This study highlights the holistic nature and “leakiness” of teacher leadership. The women teachers in this study did not conceptualize their leadership as separate from their instructional practice and work with and for students. We saw our negotiation of power with and between the four domains in our complex interactions with our current students, former students, colleagues, administrators, friends, family, community members, politicians, professional connections, and total strangers as all part of our practice of *being a teacher and a leader* and in context of our desire for more socially just outcomes.

We engaged in this practice in a landscape filled with unresolved paradoxes—cultural norms that value both isolation/autonomy *and* collaboration, egalitarianism *and* meritocracy. Women teachers are directed to be supportive (yet their support is often

seen as weakness), expected to be nurturing (while refraining from being emotional), directed to focus on social justice concerns of students (while ignoring their own), to be passive and acquiesce to hegemonically masculine authority and male colleagues (while maintaining authority and power over students), to engage leadership by sharing the burden (not sharing the power)—and do all this in heels and makeup. Teachers are engaged in the process of education that is simultaneously oppressive and liberatory for both teachers and students.

Despite the chameleon-like changes, the one-dimensional, feminized, and all-encompassing identity *teacher* is still inherent in the identity of *teacher leader*. Most remarkably, the participants in this study seemed not only to be unfazed by these complexities and contractions but to feed off of them. The ability to navigate this terrain provided access to numerous and diverse sources of power. These women teachers had developed the skills to successfully negotiate that power within various contexts. Their leadership often consisted of feminist practices that usually not found within a “traditional” definition of leadership. To truly increase and improve a meaningful practice of teacher leadership, we must closely study the rich and contextual practices of those teacher leaders who successfully navigate this terrain and are energized by the challenge it presents.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT STATEMENT

My name is Rita Rathbone and I am currently a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I am also a public school teacher and have been one for 14 years. In my doctoral research, I would like to explore the issue of teacher leadership. As a teacher leader myself, I have found the research and scholarship on the issue is not well aligned with my own experience since it tends to ignore issues of race, gender, and class that teachers negotiate. I am looking for research participants who are teachers (not administrators—principals or assistant principals), who are engaged in teacher leadership, and who would like to explore how teacher leadership is enacted within the real world of K–12 teaching. This is the definition of teacher leadership I will be using in my research:

Teacher leadership is the process of working toward improved student outcomes, school function, and educational practice (at the school level, district level, and/or the larger field of education) through leading colleagues in formal or informal leadership roles with a focus on instructional practice, the mobilization of teacher expertise, organizational efforts, and/or effective gathering and use of resources.

- Teacher leaders may be classroom teachers or have positions without classroom responsibilities, however they are not administrators.
- Teacher leaders may have formal leadership roles but those roles have limited positional authority.
- Teacher leadership extends beyond an individual classroom and must involve the leading of colleagues.

I am looking for active participants who will also serve as “co-researchers” and must be willing to complete self-reflective writing on the topic of teacher leadership and meet with a group of other participants to discuss the topic. The time commitment will be approximately 10 hours, and in exchange for your time you will benefit from a deeper understanding of your own teacher leadership practice, the creation of written material that may benefit you in other settings and receive a \$50 Amazon gift card in compensation. Most research activities will be completed online with 3 in-person meetings taking place in the Triangle/Triad area of North Carolina.

If interested in participating, please contact me at rjrathbo@uncg.edu

Thank you!

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT STUDY SUMMARY

For Participants

Dissertation title: Teacher leadership, power, and the gendered space of teaching: Intersections and discourses.

Purposes of the Study:

- To examine the scholarship in the field and the policy “movement” of teacher leadership through a critical feminist lens
- To contribute to the body of scholarship on the topic through a critical feminist lens as the body of literature as a whole has not considered issues of gender or feminist approaches.
- To contribute teacher voices to the body of scholarship on teacher leadership as the body of literature is weak in this area as well.
- To enact teacher leadership through the research project itself.

Research Questions:

1. How has teacher leadership been defined? By whom? Whose interests do these definitions of teacher leadership serve?
2. How do the gendered aspects of teaching affect how teacher leadership is defined and enacted?
3. How do the raced, classed, and gendered/heteronormed aspects of teachers’ identities affect how they enact teacher leadership?
4. What can be learned about power in schools from how teacher leadership is being defined and enacted?
5. How is power negotiated by teacher leaders?

Operational definition of teacher leadership:

Teacher leadership is the process of working toward improved student outcomes, school function, and educational practice (at the school level, district level, and/or the larger field of education) through leading colleagues in formal or informal leadership roles with a focus on instructional practice, the mobilization of teacher expertise, organizational efforts, and/or effective gathering and use of resources.

- Teacher leaders may be classroom teachers or have positions without classroom responsibilities, however they are not administrators.
- Teacher leaders may have formal leadership roles but those roles have limited positional authority.
- Teacher leadership extends beyond an individual classroom and must involve the leading of colleagues.

Timeline:

- Review the Background and Literature Review and the proposed reflection questions
- August—a 60 minute meeting in the Triangle/Triad area (this meeting will be audio recorded). At this meeting, we will review the logistics, discuss the study, and finalize the reflection questions.
- September—all participants will submit reflection material to the established Google Drive folder and review materials of other participants. This will be followed by a 60 minute meeting of the whole group in the Triangle/Triad area (this meeting will be audio recorded). At this meeting we will review and discuss the data collected so far and choose a second set of reflection questions.
- October—all participants will submit reflection material to the established Google Drive folder and review materials of other participants. This will be followed by a 60 minute meeting of the whole group in the Triangle/Triad area (this meeting will be audio recorded). At this meeting we will review and discuss the data collected. Gift cards will be distributed
- November and December—I will contact participants by email to review my analysis for accuracy.

Proposed Reflection Questions:

1. **What is your understanding of teacher leadership and how and why do you enact it?**
2. **What are the roles of gender, race, and other important aspects of your identity in your teacher leadership activities (both your expression of identity and the landscape of your teaching environment)?**

You may answer these questions in informal writing (journal entries for example) or through spoken word in a audio or video recording. Use pseudonyms for all other people mentioned in your reflective product.

Methodology:

This study will be a collaborative autoethnography. Autoethnography uses “personal stories as windows to the world, through which they *interpret* how their selves are connected to their sociocultural contexts and how the contexts give meaning to their experiences and perspectives” (Chang, Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2013, pp. 18–19). Collaborative autoethnography uses multiple autoethnographic perspectives and a collaborative approach to sense-making from the shared data.

The following are excerpts from this source: *Autoethnography as Method* by Heewong Chang which can be accessed at this link:

http://www.kssae.or.kr/pds_wolfile/220060425100855.doc

Like ethnography, autoethnography pursues the ultimate goal of cultural understanding underlying autobiographical experiences. Like ethnographers, autoethnographers are expected to treat their autobiographical data with critical, analytical, and interpretive eyes to detect cultural undertones of what is recalled, observed, and told of them. At the end of a thorough self-examination within its cultural context, autoethnographers hope to gain a cultural understanding of self and others. Autobiographical narratives will add live details to this principled understanding, but narration should not dominate autoethnography.

Composing Autobiographical Field Texts

Autoethnographers can use various techniques to facilitate their recalling, organize memories, and compose field texts as data. The techniques of data collection include, but are not limited to, (1) using visual tools such as free drawings of significant places and diagrams (2) inventorying people, artifacts, familial and societal values and proverbs, mentors, cross-cultural experiences, and favorite/disliked activities; (3) chronicling the autoethnographer's educational history, typical day and week, and annual life cycle; (4) reading and responding to other autoethnographies and self-narratives; and (5) collecting other field texts such as stories of others, personal journals, field notes, letters, conversation, interviews with significant others, family stories, documents, photographs, memory boxes, personal-family-social artifacts, and life experiences (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 101). Autoethnographers are commended to develop their own techniques of data collection to meet their research goals.

One of the commonly used data collection techniques for ethnography is participant-observation, in which researchers participate in the lives of their informants while observing their behaviors. In a similar fashion to this, autoethnographers can observe their own behaviors and document their thoughts while living them. Rodriguez and Ryave (2002) argue that self-observation as a data collection technique is useful because it gives access to "covert, elusive, and/or personal experiences like cognitive processes, emotions, motives, concealed actions,

omitted actions, and socially restricted activities” (p. 3) and brings to the surface what is “taken-for-granted, habituated, and/or unconscious manner that [they] . . . are unavailable for recall” (p. 4). Self-observation may be used in the form of self-introspection when autoethnographers are alone or in the form of “interactive introspection” while the researchers interact with others.

Turning Autobiographical Field Texts into Autoethnography

In qualitative research, the step of data collection is not always sequential to or separate from that of data analysis/interpretation. Rather, the data collection process is often intertwined and interactive with data analysis and interpretation. In other words, these activities often take place concurrently or inform each other in a web-like fashion. For example, when autoethnographers recall past experiences, they do not randomly harvest bits of fragmented memories. Rather, they select some according to their research focus and data collection criteria. Evaluating certain experiences against the criteria is an analytical and interpretive activity that is already at work during data collection. During this data collection process, the researchers are also able to refine their criteria, which will in turn shape the analysis and interpretation process.

When analyzing and interpreting autoethnographic field texts, autoethnographers need to keep in mind that what makes autoethnography ethnographical is its ethnographic intent of gaining a cultural understanding of self that is intimately connected to others in the society. The cultural meanings of self’s thoughts and behaviors—verbal and non-verbal—need to be interpreted in their cultural context. Interpretation begs a question of “why” to be answered: **“Why does a self perceive, think, behave, and evaluate the way it does and how does the self relate to others in thoughts and actions?”** Autoethnographic data analysis and interpretation involves moving back and forth between self and others, zooming in and out of the personal and social realm, and submerging in and emerging out of data. Like other ethnographic inquiries, this step of research process is methodologically nebulous to describe and instruct because analysis and

interpretation require ethnographers' holistic insight, creative mixing of multiple approaches, and patience with uncertainty. Yet some simple strategies—searching for recurring patterns, applying existing theoretical frameworks—can be adopted as a starter in the process of analysis and interpretation.

Background and Literature Review

Teacher leadership is a hot topic right now. An ERIC descriptor search for “teacher leadership” yields only 19 results from 1979–1994, 317 results for the period 1995–2005, but 518 results from 2006–2012. Currently, there are 21 graduate level programs provided some sort of certification in teacher leadership, the NC Teacher Evaluation Instrument includes expectations of teacher leadership, and NBPTS is currently working on certification process for teacher leadership. This is problematic when the voice of actual teacher leaders is lacking within the body of research. Specifically missing is a consideration for how teacher leadership is enacted within the gendered space of teaching. “Gendered” in this context refers to the “culturally specific and changeable definitions of masculine and feminine” (Acker, 1995, p. 114). Teaching is often described as a feminized profession. This can refer to the fact that teaching is a profession predominately populated with women, the fact that female teachers are expected to perform a certain feminine and heterosexual expression of gender, and/or the fact that the work of teaching itself is gendered as feminine (the work of caring and nurturing). The accepted historical narrative is as follows: teaching became women’s work as a combination of cost savings, the sense of women as guardians of virtue and purity, and the perceived congruence between women’s biological tendencies to nurture with the work of teaching. Of course, it is not quite that simple, but in fact, women have dominated the teaching profession since about 1900.

However, when issues related to teachers are discussed researchers, policy makers, politicians, and pundits maneuver around issues of gender either with a gender-neutral approach or thinly veiled gender stereotypes (race is treated in

much the same way). Both approaches are patronizing and neither deal with the complex real experiences of teachers. In my lived experience as a teacher leader, I felt I was negotiating the complex interactions of the gendered aspects of teaching; the intersectionality of my own identity including my raced, classed, and gendered identity; and enacting leadership as a teacher. However, in my preliminary review of teacher leadership literature, I found an understanding of teacher leadership and body of work that as a whole is not responsive to the role of the intersectional identities of teachers and of the gendered aspects of teaching itself in understanding how teachers enact leadership. That is where my dissertation path started.

Some quotes to reflect on:

- “The contradictions that evolved in the nineteenth century between the doctrine of maternal love and the practice of a harsh and regiment authority, between women’s dominance in numbers and our exclusion from leadership, between the overwhelming presence of the women in classrooms and the continuing identification of men as the only person with the capacity to know, are still present in the culture of schooling.” (Grumet, 1988, p. 45)
- “Teachers’ perspectives are influenced by colleagues in the workplace and by family and community networks. They are shaped by the occupational culture and ideologies of teaching and the architecture and furnishings of schools and classrooms. Their work reflects the societal expectations that they will play a part in the complex processes of credentializing and motivating that reproduce power and privilege and the division of labor, including gendered labor, in a given society. Cultural beliefs about what is appropriate work for males and females—or more generally, the patriarchal patterns in society—provides a backdrop for everything teachers do.” (Acker, 1995, p. 116)

- “the place of caring in teachers’ work remains deeply contradictory, simultaneously the moral high ground of the teaching task and a prime site of women’s oppression” (Acker, 1995, p. 124)
- Galman’s (2012) insightful study found that White, middle-class young women enter elementary teaching because the career seems compatible with their valued White, middle-class, Western, feminine norms. In fact, Galman’s subjects rated “niceness,” “goodness,” and “attractiveness” as the most important indicators of a “good teacher.”
- Griffiths (2006) puts forth the very thought provoking idea that the feminization of teaching is not a problem, but a solution: “the feminization of teaching, insofar as it exists, is to be welcomed because it provides a space for resisting hegemonic masculinity” (p. 387). Galman (2012) applies this theory in her research: “whereas hegemonic masculinity emphasizes individualism and competition within a rigid hierarchy, feminized practices represent the inverse: embodiment, diversity, and a nonhierarchical, democratic distribution of and relationship to power” (p. 16). These two extremes exist in a dialectal relationship within our schools—they are both “problematic sites of deprofessionalization, insufficient remuneration, pastoral control, and sex-segregation . . . [and] pockets of women’s autonomy, sites of quiet resistance to hegemony and sources of informal social support for women and subaltern men” (p. 45).
- “The teacher who leads . . . gets to sit at the table with grown-ups as a first-class citizen in the school house rather than remain the subordinate in a world full of superordinates [and] enjoys variety, even relief from the often relentless tedium of the classroom.” (Barth, 2011, p. 25)
- A frequently cited barrier to teacher leadership is the “prevailing norm . . . of egalitarianism which fosters the view that teachers who step up to leadership roles are stepping out of line” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 272). The authors describe as “crab bucket culture”—the metaphor being that

“when one is crabbing, no lid is required to keep the crabs in the bucket because crabs will reach up and drag each other down should any attempt to climb out” (p. 272)

- Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) have put forth a model of five ways women lead. The first is *relational leadership*. Given women’s discomfort with masculine conceptions of power, they have exercised power *with* instead of power *over* individuals. Power is conceived as growing, not diminishing as it is shared and power is used to build relationships. Women also practice *leadership for social justice*. “Women, more than men, identify educational careers as social justice work, even if they don’t use that explicit language” (p. 11). Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) also define women’s leadership as *spiritual*—as a source of hope and resilience found in religion, mindfulness, and/or self-understanding. Finally, women seek *balance* between work and home. Fuller (2013) further integrates into Grogan and Shakeshaft’s model an earlier model published by Blackmore (1989) that Fuller describes this way:
 - Its key elements include: a view of power as multidimensional and multidirectional, leadership practiced in different context by different people not merely equated to formal roles, leadership to empower rather than to control others, a relational view of morality in which moral practice is rational within given contexts and social and political relations and not according to moral laws or principles, and leadership concerned with communitarian and collective activities and values. (Fuller, 2013, pp. 3–4)

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