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DEMYSTIFYING DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP:

HOW UNDERSTANDING PRINICPLES OF PRACTICE AND

PERCEPTIONS REGARDING AMBIGUITY CAN ENHANCE THE

LEADERSHIP CAPACITY OF DEPARTMENT CHAIRS

A Dissertation Presented

by

DIANA L. BONNEVILLE

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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College of Education
Educational Policy, Research and Administration

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Approved as to style and content by:

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Sharon Rallis, Chair

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Alexandra Lauterbach, Member

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my family for whom I am forever thankful for being a part of my life. Your love and friendship is the driving force in my happiness. Thank you for taking this amazing journey with me and for the wonderful life we have shared.

To my husband and best friend, Stephen, thank you for your unconditional support, strength, love, and ability to make me laugh. Your belief in me never wavered, even when you wondered why it was taking so long to finish. You encouraged me to reach for the stars and to advance confidently in the direction of my dreams and endeavors to live the life I have imagined. Your honorary Ph.D. degree is in the mail.

To Elton and Burke, I hope I have instilled in you the desire to be the best you can be. I'm always in your back pocket and will forever hold you close in my heart.

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My sincere appreciation is extended to the participating secondary school and especially the principal. The principal and teachers were inviting and shared their insights and expertise, making my research possible.

ABSTRACT

DEMYSTIFYING DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP:

HOW UNDERSTANDING PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE AND

PERCEPTIONS REGARDING AMBIGUITY

CAN ENHANCE THE LEADERSHIP CAPACITY OF DEPARTMENT CHAIRS

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Due to increased accountability, demands, and responsibilities, principals struggle to effectively lead schools. Therefore, they look to strengthen the structure and operations of schools by utilizing distributed leadership and the role of department chairs to build leadership capacity and improve school culture (Elmore, 2000; Harris, 2005; Spillane, 2008).

A critical aspect of distributed leadership is a school's organizational culture or "the way we do things around here" (Bryk & Schneider, 2003), which can positively or negatively influence any school initiative. Since organizational culture can foster collaboration and a shared commitment to school goals, which in turn can build leadership capacity, the school culture's capacity to influence the success or demise of any shared leadership model is explored.

Unfortunately, ambiguity within distributed leadership and the role of department chair complicate effective implementation of distributed leadership by impeding task completion and successful navigation of relationships (Mehta, Gardia, & Rathmore, 2010). Due to ever changing administration and complex and at times paradoxical mandates, a certain level of ambiguity will always exist in schools. Therefore, school leaders should accept ambiguity not as a stigma but as an asset and necessary adaptive skill that gives people the confidence and motivation to navigate the unknown.

The conceptual framework for this study incorporates my experiences as a principal and former department chair, as well as the theoretical anchors of distributed leadership, role theory, organizational leadership theories, self-efficacy, and organizational commitment. This study utilized an ethnographic qualitative approach, relying on a descriptive single case study strategy of inquiry to examine the unique relationships that exist between a principal and her department chairs to identify specific examples of and participants' perceptions towards distributed leadership, school culture, and incidents of role ambiguity. Research methods included individual and small group interviews, direct non-participatory observations, and analysis of site documents. Key principles of distributed leadership, as well as descriptions of how ambiguity and school culture can influence distributed leadership are explored in the findings, which are intended to help school systems conceptualize a framework for successful and efficacious implementation of distributed leadership.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority."
(Blanchard, 2012)

Due to increased accountability, demands, and responsibilities, principals struggle to effectively lead schools. Therefore, they look to strengthen the structure and operations of schools by distributing leadership to department chairs to build leadership capacity and improve school culture (Chance & Lingren, 1988; Elmore, 2000; Harris, 2005; Spillane, 2008). While department chairs are recognized as being critically important, their roles and expectations are ambiguous (Mayers & Zepeda, 2002; Siskin, 1991; Weller & Weller, 2002; Zepeda & Kruskamp, 2007), which can impede them from completing required tasks, finding job satisfaction, navigating successful relationships, and building leadership capacity (Burns & Gmelch, 1992; Mehta, Gardia, & Rathmore, 2010).

A critical aspect of distributed leadership and a school's success is its organizational culture, or "the way we do things around here" (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). A school's culture can make or break any initiative since school effectiveness is dependent upon the extent to which beliefs and values are shared among department chairs and within departments, and whether they foster collaboration (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Understanding the significance of organizational culture and how it can foster collaboration and a shared commitment is necessary to be maximally effective in distributing leadership.

Ambiguity, however, does not need to be an obstacle to effective role performance and task completion. In fact, some view ambiguity as "the new surety in

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education" (Donlan, 2014, p. 22) and a necessary skill for unprecedented change. Due to ever changing administrative personnel, complex and at times paradoxical mandates, and school-based problems, a certain level of ambiguity will always exist in schools. Therefore, school leaders should accept ambiguity not as a stigma but as an asset and necessary adaptive skill that gives people the confidence and motivation to navigate the unknown (Donlan, 2014; Savelsbergh, Gevers, van der Heijden, & Poell, 2012; Weick, 1976), especially in complex school structures. Since research supports that modeling self-efficacy, adaptability, and organizational commitment while offering targeted support improves morale, school culture, and student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 2009; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004), I suggest that a principal can use these same theoretical constructs to develop a positive school atmosphere and harness ambiguity for more effective distributed leadership.

This study utilized an ethnographic qualitative approach, relying on a descriptive single case study strategy of inquiry to examine the unique relationship and interactions that exist between a principal and her department chairs to identify specific examples of and participants' perceptions towards distributed leadership, school culture, and incidents of role ambiguity. The utilization of transformational and situational leadership strategies within the implementation of distributed leadership was evident at this site, as was the school culture's capacity to influence the success or demise of the shared leadership model. Individual and small group interviews, direct non-participatory observations, and analysis of site documents increased my understanding of participants' perceptions towards distributed leadership and demonstrated how various principles of practice were implemented to increase leadership capacity of department chairs.

My findings are grounded in and interpreted through my conceptual framework, which incorporates my experiences as a principal and former department chair, as well as the theoretical anchors of distributed leadership, role theory, organizational leadership theories, self-efficacy, and the influential factors of organizational commitment and motivation. These findings are intended to encourage school systems to explore the possibilities of accepting a paradigm shift towards ambiguity and assist in the conception of a framework for successful and efficacious implementation of distributed leadership.

Statement of Problem

While leadership is the key to effective schools (Elmore, 2002; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Marzano, McNulty & Waters, 2005), it is no longer a "one-person business" (Hulpia, Devos & Van Keer, 2011, p. 729). Due to changes in community demands and demographics, higher standards, and increased federal and state accountability, secondary school principals struggle to meet their responsibilities effectively (Elmore, 2000). Since no single individual with limited resources, time, and energy can address all the demands and concerns facing educational leaders (Day, Gronn, & Salas, 2004), principals look to build and maximize leadership capacity by moving towards distributed leadership or shared leadership practices to increase student achievement, improve school culture, and meet school objectives (Gronn, 2002; Harris, 2005; Spillane & Diamond, 2007).

Spillane (2006) and Smylie, Conley, and Marks (2002) define *distributed leadership* as the focal shift from leadership performed by individuals in specific roles towards viewing leadership through interactions among individuals either by design, default, or necessity. Unlike leadership theories that focus on individual attributes,

leadership is conceived as a collective, social process emerging through social interactions (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Distributed leadership assumes that different individuals in a school system have varying skills, competencies, training, and experience, and that utilizing department chairs' strengths and specific skills can potentially motivate teachers, improve instructional practices, and positively influence student achievement (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008).

However, there is an apparent gap between the philosophy of distributed leadership and the reality of its actual implementation. Literature examining distributed leadership remains broad and diverse, and encompasses "shared" (Pearce & Conger, 2003), "democratic", and "dispersed" (Ray, Clegg, & Gordon, 2004) conceptions of leadership. The simplistic yet varied understanding of the meaning and purpose of distributed leadership, as well as the continuous changes within a school, leads to principals' difficulties in implementation. Principals who are viewed as effective leaders within their school do not necessarily follow principles of distributed leadership all of the time. In fact, this study examines how a dynamic and popular principal utilizes aspects of distributed leadership to varying degrees and on a situational basis.

Based on my personal experiences as a former department chair and current secondary principal, I view the leadership and expertise of department chairs as a critical resource for school and student success, as well as essential components of any distributed leadership model. Just as ambiguity is inherent in distributed leadership (Harris, 2007), it is also inherent in the role of department chairs. *Role ambiguity* is defined as the uncertainty of what tasks or requirements need to be completed, the priority of those tasks, and how best to perform such tasks (Burns & Gmelch, 1992).

Poorly written job descriptions with vague expectations impede department chairs from completing required tasks and cultivating leadership capacity (Burns & Gmelch, 1992; Elmore, 2000; Siskin, 1991; Zepeda & Kruskamp, 2007). Complex school-based problems and technical mandates further increase ambiguity. Ramifications of this type of uncertainty are great and influence relationships, task completion, contextual understanding of situations, decision-making within departments, and the ability to problem solve effectively.

Ambiguity, however, does not need to be an obstacle for effective role performance and task completion. Good leaders require flexibility and a willingness to change their style to handle complex situations as they arise (Fullan, 2007; Snowden & Gorton, 2002). Ambiguity positively increases employee creativity, motivation, confidence, and learning (Savelsbergh et al., 2012), and therefore can be leveraged in order for principals to delegate responsibility, share in the decision- making process, and build leadership capacity. While many argue for the resolution or removal of ambiguity from the role of department chairs, principals should in fact embrace ambiguity for its benefits: fostering a sense of efficacy, perseverance, creative problem-solving, adaptability, self-determination, and support for distributed leadership (Weick, 1976). Principals' support of department chairs and role modeling of synergy, organizational commitment, flexibility, adaptability, strong interpersonal skills, and self-efficacy can provide department chairs with the confidence and motivation needed to overcome ambiguity, allowing them to embrace new and challenging tasks (Bandura, 1997; Bandura, Adams, Hardy, & Howells, 1980; Leithwood et al., 2008; Smith & Piele, 2006).

According to Bryk and Schneider (2003), a critical aspect of distributed leadership and a school's success is its organizational culture, which is formed through everyday interactions among students, teachers, and administrators. The culture of a school or "the way we do things around here" (Barth, 2001), is the glue that holds an organization together and unites people around shared values, assumptions, and beliefs about what works and does not work, which influences daily behavior and shapes the identity of a school. A school's culture can make or break any initiative since school effectiveness is dependent upon the extent to which beliefs and values are shared among department chairs and within departments, and whether they foster collaboration (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). If a school has a strong organizational culture, department chairs may be less conflicted about accepting role ambiguity. Therefore, understanding the significance of organizational culture is necessary to be maximally effective in distributing leadership.

Since research supports that modeling self-efficacy, adaptability, and organizational commitment while offering targeted support improves morale, school culture, and student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2004), I suggest that a principal can use these same theoretical constructs to develop a positive school atmosphere and harness ambiguity for more effective distributed leadership.

Purpose of the Study

As an administrator with close to twenty years of experience leading schools, I strive to be an effective leader and readily depend on my strong relationships with faculty and department chairs to meet school objectives and complete tasks. I consistently rely on distributed leadership to not only fulfill responsibilities but also to share in the decision-

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making and problem-solving process within the school. In fact, I could not do my job without distributed leadership! Since I try to maximize the leadership capacity of my department chairs by embracing collaborative problem-solving, shared decision-making, ambiguity and outside of the box thinking, I have often wondered how other principals fulfill all of their responsibilities and manage ambiguity. Since distributed leadership and ambiguity have served me well, I wanted to explore these concepts in a different setting.

However, literature is vague in regards to specific examples of successful distributed leadership and the perceptions held by the principal, department chairs, and teachers of the leadership effectiveness within the role of the department chair. Studies examining the relationship between situational leadership and distributed leadership are also lacking. Case studies that differentiate between distributed leadership and other shared leadership models are absent, as well.

The variety of roles and responsibilities of department chairs within higher education are heavily emphasized within research. Most literature on department chairs either focuses on the importance of leadership or the difficulties of juggling various tasks. Literature has not been specific to secondary school department chairs nor has it addressed how to accept the ambiguity of the position. On the contrary, most literature pertaining to role ambiguity advocates for clearer job descriptions, specific professional development, or additional supports to assist department chairs in task completion.

My study describes the existing theoretical research on distributed leadership and social cognition, as well as the influential factors of self-efficacy, motivation, and organizational commitment, which support the role of department chairs. Increasing productivity by enhancing interpersonal relationships is conceptualized in certain

organizational leadership theories, such as transformational and situational leadership, and is necessary to maximize distributed leadership (Smith & Piele, 2006). Due to an emphasis on the shared values of social norms, self-determination, motivation, and the ability to correctly interpret the context of various situations, concepts within these theories can be developed into strategies to help individuals accept and explain ambiguity while building leadership capacity and a positive school climate. My findings are put forth utilizing the epistemological lens of social constructivism and the theoretical constructs of distributed leadership. In doing so, I was able to gauge how interactions among the principal and her department chairs helped to construct relationships which support or hinder the success of distributed leadership, as well as the role of ambiguity and school culture within a shared leadership model.

Since I wanted to reflectively explore distributed leadership in a different setting, site selection was deliberate. This study investigated a shared leadership model in a particular secondary school in western Massachusetts and examined the perceptions the principal and her department chairs held about the implementation of distributed leadership and how the principles of distributed leadership were enacted. The perceptions held by the principal and her department chairs in regards to working within a strong organizational culture and harnessing ambiguity were also explored since ask completion, decision-making, and management of relationships are influenced by these perceptions. Evidence of distributed leadership is cited and descriptions of how its implementation looks in practice are provided. This study assessed how a dynamic and popular principal who utilizes distributed leadership to varying degrees and on a situational basis is successful as a school leader. Unraveling the details of the principal's success can

encourage other school administrators to build leadership capacity and a positive school culture, as well as accept ambiguity as a necessary adaptive skill.

Significance of the Study

This study provides a framework for maximizing leadership capacity and is significant in its attempt to address the apparent gap between the philosophy of distributed leadership, which often bears little resemblance to the theoretical construct, and the actual implementation of distributed leadership. This study investigated how leaders can implement fundamental change by understanding how social interactions strengthen or diminish leadership capacity and how building a strong school culture can further enhance the leadership capacity within a school.

While several case studies on distributed leadership have found role clarity to be a significant support and necessity for distributed leadership (Elmore, 2000), I argue that ambiguity does not need to be a stigma or an obstacle to effective role performance and task completion. This study offers a different perspective toward role ambiguity, calling for a paradigm shift which allows principals and department chairs to maximize the benefits of ambiguity, such as creativity, "thinking outside of the box", intrinsic motivation, work commitment, synergy, adaptability, flexibility, and collaboration in order to effectively complete tasks (Savelsbergh, et al., 2012; Weick, 1976). Therefore, my argument is grounded in the assumption that ambiguity should be viewed as an asset and necessary adaptive skill for change (Donlan, 2014).

Ultimately, I hope to add to the existing research on distributed leadership and the paradigm shift necessary to accept ambiguity. While there is much research pertaining to the theory of distributed leadership, specific examples and characteristics of effective

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distributed leadership are difficult to find, and a comprehensive list of guiding principles is lacking. While the pitfalls associated with role ambiguity are well researched, the acceptance and benefits of role ambiguity have been sparsely referenced. No specific qualitative studies have been conducted on how to harness and channel role ambiguity through a paradigm shift involving principals' acceptance, modeling of organizational commitment and self-efficacy, nor have there been any studies examining how incidents of ambiguity have been interpreted.

Results from this study will be quite beneficial to me as a researcher and practitioner. Reflecting on my practice, I would like to determine if I truly do implement distributed leadership effectively. I would also like to further build the leadership capacity of my department chairs by learning new strategies to increase the level of their self-efficacy and organizational commitment.

Not only will these research results influence and guide my leadership practices but research results could be beneficial for school administrators to strengthen relationships, increase productivity, streamline decision-making and open dialogue that acknowledges and accepts role ambiguity among department chairs. Since specific principles of distributed leadership are identified and analyzed within this research, principals can use this knowledge to build leadership capacity and a positive school culture within their schools, as well as help department chairs accept ambiguity as a necessary adaptive skill. Information gleamed from this case study could encourage principals to consider incorporating principles of distributed leadership into their practice or implementing a shared leadership model within their own schools to increase shared decision-making or improve school culture.

Research Questions

Since I believe that I implement distributed leadership on a daily basis, I wanted to research a principal whose strength is in facilitating shared leadership. This study focused on the interactions this principal has with her department chairs and project leaders, especially in regards to sharing responsibilities and decision-making. Therefore, the site selection of Small Town High School for this case study was deliberate. The overarching research questions that guided this study were: **What evidence exists that the principal uses shared or distributed leadership? What does it look like in this setting and how is it perceived? To what degree does the principal extol the principles of shared leadership?** Two additional research questions guided this study, as well:

1. How do department chairs approach the ambiguity that is inherent in the position?
2. How does the culture of the school influence the shared leadership model?

Overview of Methods

A compressed, ethnographic, descriptive case study approach was taken in order to illustrate the complexities of distributed leadership, perceptions towards incidents of ambiguity, and the unique relationship between a principal and her department chairs. Data for this study were collected over a two month period in the spring of 2015 and included ten observations of meetings, ten interviews, and the review of various relevant site documents.

I spent a considerable amount of time at the site, a high school in western Massachusetts with a student population of 530, interviewing the principal, department chairs, and project leaders of the shared leadership model in order to gain an

understanding of the principal's leadership style, how distributed leadership is practiced, ambiguity managed, interactions handled, responsibilities shared, and decisions made. I was an observer at department chair, faculty, and shared leadership group meetings in order to obtain a clear picture of how expectations and goals are communicated and how decisions are made. I witnessed firsthand how beliefs, values, and relationships influence the culture of a school.

Participants completed a survey in order to assess their level of self-efficacy and organizational commitment as a collective, collaborative group. Specific site documents were collected and examined: chart of the shared leadership model, minutes and PowerPoint presentation slides from shared leadership group meetings, and the job description for the position of department chair. A careful review of these documents and interview responses pertaining to the development of these documents shed light on the relationship the principal has with her staff, the type of leadership the principal implements, how decisions are made, and how interactions strengthen or diminish relationships, which influence the school culture.

The collection and analysis of data in this study occurred concurrently and inductively through coding. Once I collected and reviewed the data and transcripts, any questions that I had were addressed through follow up visits and email.

<u>Overview of Chapters</u>

Throughout the chapters, the terms shared leadership and distributed leadership are used interchangeably, which parallels the usage in leadership literature. Before investigating the benefits of ambiguity, it is important to understand the theoretical framework for shared or distributed leadership, which is grounded in social cognition.

Theories related to roles and organizational leadership are investigated in Chapter 2. By understanding theories in social cognition, roles, organizational leadership, self-efficacy, and organizational commitment, the acceptance of ambiguity becomes possible. The position of the department chair, including the roles, responsibilities, and challenges are described in detail. The research and methodology of the study are explained in Chapter 3 and include the following sections: rationale for an ethnographic qualitative single case study, research questions, participants and site selection, instrumentation, data collection and analysis processes, limitations of the study, verification of findings, as well as ethical considerations. A discussion of results and key findings are described in Chapter 4. A summary of the study and findings, contributions to research, a discussion of unanticipated findings, implications for practice, as well as the direction for future research are shared in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Distributed Leadership

Leadership is defined by what one does, not who one is (Serrat, 2009).

Charismatic leaders such as Ghandi or Nelson Mandela are viewed as having heroic, almost superhuman qualities and were the focal point of earlier leadership theories. For much of its history, American society believed that principals were such dynamic and powerful individuals that they could accomplish all of the necessary tasks and responsibilities singlehandedly. Leaders, many scholars held, were born rather than made, and according to trait theory, posit that certain individuals inherently possess leadership traits, such as intelligence, power, and influence.

While positive outcomes were often associated with charismatic leadership, there were also potential dangers of abuse of power and single-mindedness (Northouse, 2016). Many school principals who attempted to single-handedly meet all of the increased, complex demands have failed or been ineffective. Dynamic leaders, such as the infamous bat- wielding Joe Clark, turned schools around by setting new expectations for students and staff but left voids in their inevitable departure, returning the school to its previous, chaotic state. As expectations and pressure on schools have increased, the historical top-down administrative style has proved insufficient, thus ending the era of the charismatic, superhero principal.

Distributed leadership has become a popular 'post-heroic' representation of leadership (Badaracco, 2001), which has encouraged a shift in focus from the attributes

and behaviors of individuals to a more systematic perspective, whereby leadership is conceived of as an emerging collective social process (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Although a relatively new theory in education, the notion of sharing power and leadership responsibilities within organizations has been embraced by leaders since the turn of the millennium or earlier. Oduro (2004) suggests that distributed leadership dates back to 1250 BC, making it one of the most ancient leadership theories. Distributed leadership, or the expansion of leadership roles in schools beyond those in administrative positions, represents one of the most influential ideas to emerge in the field of education within the last decade (Hallinger & Heck, 2009).

Distributed leadership is often used interchangeably with shared (Pearce & Conger, 2003), collective (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008), collaborative (Wallace, 2003), participative (Vroom & Jago, 1995) and co-leadership (Spillane, 2006). Associated with terms such as empowerment, democratic, dispersed leadership, autonomy, and self-management (Storey, 2004), school principals look to informal and formal leaders, such as shared leadership teams and department chairs, to share decision-making responsibility and build a positive, committed community. Distributed leadership highlights the leadership practices of a network of individuals who have multiple types of expertise interacting and sharing tasks with one another, which is beneficial in complex settings such as high schools.

The emerging role of school leadership as web-like, interactive, and collective (Jacobs, 2010) holds appeal over the traditional, hierarchical structure under which American schools have historically operated. Distributed leadership highlights the interdependence and "interconnectedness of purpose" of the individual, the environment,

and the situation (Harris, 2005; Spillane, 2006). This interconnectedness shifts the focus

from the individual to the interactions and collective activities between leaders,

followers, and their situations. Leadership practice is constructed through these actions

and interactions and implies the engagement of many, which Spillane (2006) has termed

the *"leader plus"* perspective. According to Spillane (2006), the "leader plus" aspect

acknowledges all of the individuals who have a hand in leadership and management

practice rather than just those in formal designated leadership roles. Leader plus

recognizes that these interdependent relationships are stronger than individuals'

contributions, and that organizations can be more effective by simply making better use

of these relationships and capabilities.

   While collective responsibility is stressed over top down authority, distributed

leadership, however, does not imply that formal leadership structures are absent. While

the principal still has a critical role in a distributed leadership model, empowering others

is the principal's primary responsibility. The principal builds leadership capacity by

ensuring that others are afforded leadership opportunities and are provided the necessary

supports to make change. As Harris (2008) noted, "While many people have the potential

to exercise leadership in any organization, the key to success will be the way that

leadership is facilitated, orchestrated, and supported" (p. 173).

   Distributed leadership is a key factor in the motivation of teachers and promotes a

deep commitment to collective action for whole-school success (Crowther, Hann, &

Andrews, 2002). Examples of successful distributed leadership can be found in

educational journals but are not prevalent or detailed. In examples of successful

implementation of distributed leadership, a collaborative culture of trust, joint problem-

solving and honest feedback are evident. An Alaskan elementary school improved literacy by holding everyone accountable for all of the successes and struggles of all students (Barton, 2011); a middle school in Idaho had an inclusive data review team that reviewed school improvement initiatives on a weekly basis to increase attendance rates and foster a positive culture (Reed, 2011); a Midwestern high school supported teachers' professional development by scheduling professional learning communities to meet during the school day.

Utilizing the skills and knowledge of those within the school creates a common culture that functions positively and effectively (Harris, 2005). Allowing others to share in the collaborative decision-making process builds the leadership capacity of the staff and increases the principal's leadership effectiveness in the process because distributed leadership is more effective when leadership roles are distributed to those that have or can develop the skills and expertise required to carry out leadership tasks.

Differences Between Distributed Leadership and Other Models

Distributed leadership is different from other leadership theories because it does not replace individual leadership but is a dynamic collaborative process that emerges within an organization to problem-solve and achieve beneficial outcomes for an organization (Conger & Pearce, 2003; Harris, 2008). Where distributed leadership differs from other constructs, according to Harris (2008) and Spillane (2008), is that distributed leadership is fluid and emergent, which requires a shift in thinking. Unlike other leadership theories, distributed leadership deliberately sets out to deal with increased pressures and demands by requiring a more responsive approach of leaders and followers, being purposeful in sharing responsibility and decision-making, and utilizing the power

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of influence. The complex nature of high schools requires people to share responsibility and accountability, as well as problem-solve collaboratively rather than in hierarchies with clearly defined divisions of labor.

There are few frameworks, however, that describe how shared or distributed leadership as a conceptual and analytical frame for improving instruction and school performance actually works (Harris, 2013; Spillane, 2006; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004). Distributed leadership is not something 'done' by an individual 'to' others but is a group activity that works through and within relationships (Bennett, Wise, Woods, & Harvey, 2003). Furthermore, distributed leadership does not replace individual leadership but focuses on the social interactions between leaders and followers and how they work together to problem-solve or achieve goals.

Ambiguity within Distributed Leadership

While distributed leadership can strengthen a school's culture, there are ambiguous conceptual constructs that can impede progress. Successful distributed leadership is difficult to pinpoint because the concept in itself is so ambiguous. It can also be argued that since leadership equates with influence (Harris, 2008), as so many studies have shown, then all leadership is inevitably distributed to some degree. Harris (2008) identifies various common principles that demonstrate the ambiguity and elusiveness of distributed leadership:

- Flexible, broad-based leadership requires multiple levels of involvement in decision-making;

- Vertical and lateral leadership structures are linked;

- Leadership is fluid and interchangeable; and

- Improved leadership practice is the primary goal and purpose.

Common myths about distributed leadership, according to Spillane and Diamond (2007) further demonstrate the ambiguity of the term:

- Distributed leadership is a blueprint for leadership and management;

- Distributed leadership negates the role of the school principal;

- From a distributed perspective, everyone is a leader; and

- Distributed leadership is only about collaborative situations.

In the study of organizational dynamics, the term has been used synonymously with "bossless team" or "self-managed team" (Barry, 1991), which suggests that roles are complimentary and can be shared, rotated, or split. However, distributed leadership does not attempt to reduce or eliminate the need for a leader as these terms imply. It assumes that everyone in the group has leadership potential and certain skills that will be needed by the group at some point in time. Since organizational needs shift over time, those in formal leadership roles need to ensure that informal leaders have the opportunity to lead at appropriate times and are given the necessary support to make changes (Harris & Muijs, 2004).

Building Leadership Capacity

Distributed leadership implies the involvement of many rather than a few in leadership tasks and is premised on creating leadership capacity. There is an increasing body of research that points towards the importance of building leadership capacity as a means of sustaining school improvement (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). Principals look to strengthen their schools and operate more effectively at an organizational level by utilizing department chairs in their formal roles to build leadership capacity among

teachers, which in turn increases academic achievement and school improvement (Chance & Lingren, 1988; Harris, 2005). Bredeson (2005) suggests that leadership capacity within an organization is all of the strategies that improve the ability to achieve its goals by enhancing people's skills, knowledge, and commitment to improving performance. In order for distributed leadership to have positive effects on school improvement, leadership needs to be distributed to members who have or can develop the knowledge, skills, and expertise required to carry out the leadership tasks expected of them.

Stoll and Bolam (2005) suggest that capacity building involves the following processes, which fall under the broader responsibilities of department chairs:

- Creating and maintaining culture and structures;

- Facilitating learning and skill-oriented experiences and opportunities; and

- Ensuring interrelationships and synergy between teachers and administration.

High leadership capacity occurs when all department chairs have leadership responsibilities and understand the school's vision and their role in fulfilling that vision. If the principal can harness the capacity of the department chairs and relinquish some power and authority, then increases in morale, teacher self-efficacy, school culture, student achievement, and organizational sustainability are likely to occur (Hallinger & Heck, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2004).

Distribution of Labor

At the heart of distributed leadership are not the leader's actions, skills, or knowledge but the situational social interactions between leaders and followers that focus on distribution of tasks and influence processes. Situations define leadership practice

because leaders act in situations that are defined by others' actions, their structures, and routines (Spillane, 2008). When individuals share ideas and decisions, a reciprocal interdependency between their actions is created.

Spillane (2006) theorizes that distributed leadership can be a division of labor, co-performance, or parallel performance and "can coexist in the same school, differing according to the leadership function or routine" (p. 38), which compounds the ambiguity inherent in the role of department chairs. Division of labor is the starting point of distributed leadership and utilizes the organizational chart, specifying certain individuals with particular responsibilities (e.g., scheduling of teachers' classes, organizing interdisciplinary units, planning school-wide activities, rewriting school rubrics) in day-to-day operations. In this context, department chairs are not simply doers or mediators but "directors of leadership activity" (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004, p. 19).

Under the distribution of labor theory, most project outcomes focus on co-performance, mainly collaborated distribution, where work is stretched over two or more leaders who work together in the same place and at the same time to perform the same leadership routine (Spillane & Orlina, 2005), such as curriculum mapping. While collaborated distribution is similar to playing on a basketball team, coordinated distribution is similar to a relay race, with different individuals attempting to accomplish sequential tasks (e.g., using data to increase student performance, proposing a new course). Lastly, when leaders do not collaborate but work independently toward a shared goal utilizing different strategies, the type of distributed leadership utilized is known as collective distribution or parallel performance (e.g., calibrating grading rubrics, identifying departmental learning expectations). Since productive conversations

strengthen an organization's culture, the importance of collaboration cannot be overstated.

Outcomes of Distributed Leadership

Various studies show a correlation between distributed leadership and positive organizational change. Most recent literature on change, school, and instructional improvement (Elmore, 2000; Hallinger & Heck, 2009; Harris, 2008) suggest that the form of leadership most often identified with organizational improvement and increased student achievement is the one that is distributed or shared, not restricted to one leader. Professor Richard Elmore, known as the contemporary proponent of distributed leadership, advanced Spillane's theory by connecting leadership to student achievement and school performance. According to Elmore (2000), when a principal shares leadership and collaborates with teacher leaders who have multiple sources of expertise to address school-wide instructional goals, systematic instructional improvements are most likely to occur and may improve an organization's collective strength. In the words of Leithwood et al., "Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school related factors that contribute to what students learn at school" (2004, p. 3).

Leithwood & Jantzi (2000) studied the relationship between distributed leadership and student outcomes and noted that teacher effectiveness and student engagement increased when leadership was shared. Research studies (Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2009; Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kingston, & Gu, 2007; Hallinger & Heck, 2009; Harris, 2011; Leithwood, Mascall, & Strauss, 2009) reveal that distributed leadership has a positive impact on the work environment, teaching and learning processes, as well as certain types of student learning outcomes. Bolden et al. (2009) conducted a study and

determined that improvements in teamwork, responsiveness, and communication were outcomes of distributed leadership. Hallinger and Heck's (2009) research supports the effects of distributed leadership on improved academics and small but significant changes in student growth rates in math.

Research (e.g. Day et al., 2007; Leithwood et al., 2008) suggests distributed leadership is related to organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Various studies show evidence of the positive effects of distributed leadership on teachers' self-efficacy, morale, and views towards empowerment. Sheppard, Hurley, and Dibbon (2010) concluded that distributed leadership increases teacher enthusiasm and morale and positively influences their attitude towards work.

According to Harris (2008), other benefits of distributed leadership include strengthening individual skills, leadership development, self-determination, and interdependence. Other studies report that involvement in decision-making leads to decreases in teacher absenteeism (Rosenholtz, 1989). When department chairs feel heard, respected and "part of the solution" in the school's decision-making process, job satisfaction and commitment to the school are likely to increase, which in turn translates to positive student behaviors and learning outcomes (Harris, 2013).

While some research points to the general benefits of distributed leadership, not all research supports the effectiveness of distributed leadership. Empirical results show that the mere concept of distributed leadership does not have a strong link to school improvement, instructional improvement, student achievement, or leadership development (Mayrowetz, 2008). "What matters for instructional improvement and student achievement is not *that* leadership is distributed, but *how* it is distributed, to

whom and in what *context*" (Spillane, 2008, p. 149). Competing agendas or conflicting

priorities threaten an organization's cohesiveness. Threats to formal leadership can

challenge distributed leadership as traditional leadership roles are blurred and boundary

management issues emerge. Structural and cultural boundaries can be crossed, resulting

in boundary issues and competing leadership styles. Coordination, planning, and the

focus on the skills, strengths, and expertise of individuals is necessary. A teacher's sense

of empowerment increases when becoming a department chair but role conflict and

threats to the status quo also increase due to the shift in the power dynamic among peers.

Understanding the different types of power and how it influences behaviors and

relationships is helpful and necessary to provide a clearer picture of how decisions are

made and contextual situations interpreted.

Power Within Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership is a profoundly political phenomenon and is closely linked

to notions of power: inducing, or preventing another to act in a way that they otherwise

would not have done (Bush, 2013). Department chairs use power to make decisions and

influence others although they often do not think of themselves as authoritative or

powerful. Empowerment, a major component of distributed leadership, is defined as

investing in subordinates the power to make decisions, which is in diametrical opposition

to the conventional notion of the single, heroic leader (Camburn & Han, 2009). In order

for distributed leadership to be effective, decision-making capabilities need to be

acquiesced to others within the organization, empowering subordinates to be influential.

Empowered teachers believe their involvement is genuine and their opinion considered in

the outcome of a decision. This in turn, according to Heck and Hallinger (2009),

encourages commitment, broad participation, and shared accountability for student learning. When teachers are empowered, they take charge of their own professional growth and resolve their own conflicts and problems. Distributed leadership cannot materialize without empowerment (Spillane et al., 2001; Spillane et al., 2004).

Although power is insinuated by the position itself, the degree of power is contingent upon the ability to achieve desired objectives over the resistance of others. If resistance and role conflict are great, the effectiveness of the department chair decreases. Therefore, department chairs use their departments to achieve goals through cooperation and competition just as politicians would use specific interest groups to advocate their causes.

In the face of strong mandates, department chairs are relatively powerless to resist change forces, as are other educators and administrators. Even twenty years ago, it was recognized that department chairs are expected "to respond to greater pressures and to comply with mandates under conditions that are best stable and at worst deteriorating" (Hargreaves, 1995, p. 88). Attempting to cope with all of the demanding tasks and responsibilities, department chairs discover that the power derived from the position is not enough to accomplish what needs to be done.

Department chairs need to understand that power is an important, constant force in all interactions. Their use or misuse of power influences leadership effectiveness, dynamics of relationships, and productivity within a department. I have observed department chairs use their power and authority to empower department members and increase productivity. I have also witnessed how misuse of power leads to lack of trust, decreased productivity, absence of constructive conflict resolution, as well as escalation

of power struggles. When department members do not feel valued or respected, they will not turn to the department chair to find sustainable solutions for conflicts, regardless of the type of power held by the department chair. Department chairs need credibility within their departments for their authority to act (Little, 1995).

While several different types of power can be found in a secondary school, they often overlap and are dependent upon situational context, further increasing ambiguity. In large urban schools, department chairs have formal authority or *positional power* and are typically responsible for recommending teachers for professional status, evaluating teachers on a regular basis, scheduling teacher assignments, and providing instructional leadership and support for members within the department. Since department chairs are granted a certain amount of positional power over staffing, resourcing, and decision-making, power relationships exist in constant tension and conflict. By understanding the school's political culture and department's subculture, department chairs are able to resolve potential conflicts and manage change more effectively and efficiently (Tierney, 1988).

According to Sergiovanni (1984), personal characteristics such as academic competence, expertise, and ability to show respect shape the informal authority of department chairs. Informal authority, which is obtained through followers' attitudes, is based on the perceptions of the quality of the department chair's behavior. This *referent power* is derived from personal characteristics, such as respect and admiration. Rewards and punishments are also effective in establishing informal authority. Both types of authority shape individual and group behavior. However, disagreements and confusion arise when there is lack of clarity between formal and informal authority.

When department chairs have a greater sense of daily autonomy and take pride in their expertise and skills in a specific content knowledge, their positional power is also *expert power.* Gaining expert power increases the level of professionalism and strengthens relationships within the department. While resources are available to every department, my experience as both a principal and former department chair support the claim that department chairs with more expert power and experience advocate for more resources (i.e., textbooks, supplementary materials, new courses) and usually receive them. Department chairs need to be able to differentiate and appropriately use the various types of power when making decisions and advocating for their departments. Department chairs should be mindful that influence is critical, regardless of the type of power held, and that influence can persuade department members to act in certain ways.

Table 2.1. Summary of Concepts from Literature Supporting the Construct of Distributed Leadership

Dimension	Researcher	Key concept of distributed leadership
Empowerment	Heck & Hallinger (2009)	Empowers staff, encourages commitment, broad participation, and shared accountability
	Harris (2008)	Formal leaders let go of decision-making powers to subordinates
	Storey (2004)	Autonomy and self-management are stressed
Shared decision-making	Heck & Hallinger (2009)	Collaborative decisions focus on school improvement and positive culture
	Spillane 92004); Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond (2004)	Leadership practice is distributed through the interaction of leaders, followers, and situations;

	Harris (2008)	Leadership is flexible, fluid, and interchangeable; links vertical and lateral leadership structures; a need for strong consensus
Building leadership capacity	Harris (2008); Mitchell & Sackney (2001)	DL is not superficial delegation but important in capacity building and sustaining school improvement; key to success is how leadership is facilitated and supported
	Bredeson (2005); Murphy (2006); Stoll & Bolam (2005)	Culture has strong focus on interpersonal relationships and synergy; enhances skills and knowledge to improve performance
	Harris & Muijs (2004)	Ensure that others have opportunities to lead and are given supports to make changes
	Hallinger & Heck (2009)	Will result in increases in morale, teacher self-efficacy and organizational sustainability

The top of the table also shows "multiple levels of involvement." in the last column above the Harris (2008) row.

Influential Factors

Organizational Commitment

Leadership has a direct effect on employees' organizational commitment and has received considerable attention in the research community (Nguni, Sleegers, & Denessen, 2006). Organizational commitment refers to the extent to which employees see themselves as belonging to an organization (Meyer, Kam, Goldenberg, & Bremner, 2103) and is critical for organizational effectiveness (Dee, Henkin, & Singleton, 2006). The emotional attachment or *affective commitment* of employees influences how an individual

sees themselves as belonging or feeling a connection to an institution or organization. According to Lunenburg and Ornsetin (2004), it is the assumption that people want to do their best, and it is the administrator's job to enable them to do so by constantly improving the system in which they work. However, individuals must see the value and significance of their work in order to be committed.

A department chair possesses organizational commitment when he/she is loyal to the school; believes and accepts the school's goals and values; and exerts effort on behalf of the school. These characteristics imply that department chairs wish to be active participants in the school, have an impact on decisions being made, and are willing to contribute beyond what is expected of them.

The research on organizational commitment is vast, due in large part to the positive correlations between affective commitment and motivation, job satisfaction, performance, and productivity (Dello Russo, Vecchione, & Borgogni, 2013), as well as the potential to predict organizational outcomes. Those who have a high sense of organizational commitment tend to have a strong belief in the organization's goals, readily lend their support, and feel a strong need to maintain their membership in the organization (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). Therefore, it is critical for principals and department chairs to foster a high level of organizational commitment on the part of the teachers.

Loui (1995) conducted a study involving 109 workers, examining the relationship between organizational commitment and levels of trust, job involvement, and job satisfaction and found positive correlations amongst all three areas. In a study conducted by DeCotiis & Summers (1987), organizational commitment was found to be a strong

predictor for individual motivation and job performance. Reza Omidifar (2013) conducted a study in Iran examining leadership style, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction, and the results revealed positive and significant correlations.

Organizational culture, job involvement, salary, workplace climate, and job satisfaction are predictors of organizational commitment (Freund & Drach-Zahavy, 2007). Feedback, encouragement, support, and acknowledgement from the principal lead to increased organizational commitment of department chairs. Commitment is further increased when clear school objectives have been communicated, specific directions vocalized, and appropriate professional development planned. Committed employees display more positive attitudes and behaviors at work (i.e., satisfaction, performance), and have lower absenteeism and turnover rates than uncommitted employees (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). There is also a direct correlation between teachers' perceptions of their own level of empowerment and organizational commitment.

When teachers are committed to their profession, stronger relationships with peers and students develop, resulting in improved school culture and increases in student achievement. Although organizational commitment is an indirect variable to student outcomes, pedagogical quality is enhanced when a teacher is committed to a school. Higher organizational commitment results in organizational effectiveness, more effort and increased dedication to attain organizational goals, higher job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and stronger school culture (Dee et al., 2006), which in turn leads to more effective distributed leadership.

The organizational commitment and emotional attachment of department chairs is affected by the extent of their decision-making capabilities. Jermier & Berkes (1979)

discovered that employees who were allowed to participate in decision-making had greater levels of commitment to the organization. When department chairs believe they have many opportunities to participate in the school's authentic decision-making process, they are more committed to the school. This in turn increases the leadership capacity within schools. Schools that foster a climate of shared decision-making increase the likelihood of member participation, which ultimately leads to greater forms of distributed leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

However, not all department chairs want to assume decision-making responsibilities. When teachers become anxious by shared decision-making, teaching practices may be negatively impacted. When participation is perceived as an added task to the normal workload of teachers and extra duties are attached to making decisions, decision-making is viewed as an added burden and thus reduces the positive impact on organizational commitment (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

In my experience, some view decision-making as added stress and cannot handle the additional responsibility. Some worry that the decisions made may not be fully supported and embraced by the faculty; some do not want to justify their decisions to their peers; and others want to avoid conflict at all costs. Some department chairs also are concerned about alienating their peers through their use of power. This stress and isolation influences department chairs' leadership effectiveness.

Motivation

The drive for success, self-fulfillment, and maximizing one's own performance are key elements of motivational theories. Since people can be self-directed and creative at work if properly motivated (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2012), understanding the

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importance of motivation, how motivation and self-efficacy are linked, and how to help maximize an individual's performance and potential through a holistic approach is critical in harnessing role ambiguity.

Motivation is defined in a variety of ways in the literature. According to Yorks (1976), motivation includes those forces within an individual that push or propel him to satisfy basic needs or desires. Hersey et al., (2012) define motivation as the level of effort an individual is willing to apply toward the achievement of a particular goal or motive. "It is an internal process that energizes and directs behavior. It is about how we decide to do something; it is about feeling in control of what we do and the desire to achieve" (BNA Inc., 1969 as cited by Gunawan, 2009).

Just as self-efficacy beliefs are linked with higher aspirations, a person's sense of well-being is closely linked to their needs. Actions are oriented toward goals with top-level goals being "motives", which correspond to human needs. However, satisfied needs are not motivators. Only unsatisfied or unmet needs motivate an individual, and a principal's knowledge of which level a department chair is focused on is instrumental in satisfying and motivating them, as well as increasing productivity, performance, and professional growth (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). Since people construct their identities through their commitments to projects, identifying the source of motivation of an individual's actions is essential toward establishing organizational commitment.

The Structure of a High School

High schools are typically viewed as bureaucratic organizations that are tightly coupled with strict accountability, detailed procedures and policies, leading to the disempowerment and lack of organizational commitment of department chairs (Shedd &

Bacharach, 1991). However, many organizational theorists argue that schools are complex, and therefore loosely coupled with rational assumptions, lack of centralized control, unpredictability, inconsistent outcomes, and uncertainty (Weick, 1976). Loose coupling, according to Aurini (2012) and Weick (1976), allows schools to integrate multiple and conflicting goals by offering department chairs the flexibility and wiggle room to work harmoniously or retain autonomy in certain situations. Therefore, the principal's leadership is critical in orchestrating and supporting multiple goals.

> While many of the same structural activities occur in a school in which distributed leadership is implemented, the position of the principal differs. While still responsible for the overall performance of the school, the principal's primary role is to enhance the skills and knowledge of department chairs and teachers, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the school together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding people accountable for their contributions to the collective result (Elmore, 2000, p. 15).

The organizational structure is the foundation of any institution and influences the culture, environment, and behavior, as well as any informal learning. High schools with hierarchical structure and goal orientation toward school objectives, productivity, and high student achievement typify bureaucracy in which the "command and control approach" (Lambert, 2002) is typically implemented. Staff, faculty, department chairs, and administration organize vertically with responsibility, authority, and power increasing as one goes up the hierarchy. The hierarchical structure is reinforced when department chairs establish communication channels, specify school goals, or promote positive relationships with administration. Formal rules, roles, and procedures are in place, and a strict chain of command is followed. Role ambiguity is less of an issue in a structural hierarchy because faculty and department chairs fulfill any responsibilities or

requirements relayed from the principal and utilize the "means end calculation" of what

needs to be done to become more efficient (Mabey, 2003). While department members

do what is required of them within a structural hierarchy, productivity and organizational

commitment are increased when a department chair is able to unite department members

into a positive departmental subculture, creating their own rituals and routines.

The Position of Department Chair

"I have likened my position as a department chair to that of a firefighter, fighting a roaring blaze while constantly stomping out small fires that keep springing up around me." (Haggbloom, 2013, p. 2)

Understanding the various responsibilities and expectations of department chairs

is necessary in order to fully recognize the critical adaptive skills needed by department

chairs in order to increase morale and student achievement, and strengthen relationships.

Department chairs are teacher leaders with significant content expertise and they exercise

professional responsibility in and out of the classroom by enabling department members

to act. Guided by job descriptions and vague expectations, they are typically financially

compensated or given release time. Teachers become department chairs for a variety of

reasons: to gain status and prestige; access to administration; protect the interests of their

department; advocate for specific academic programs; advance their careers, as well as

meet new leadership challenges. They are often selected simply because they agree with

the principal's vision, reside within the principal's inner circle, or emerge to fill a

vacancy (Thornton, 2010).

Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, and Hann (2002) conducted an extensive study in

Australia pertaining to teacher leaders, and I believe the findings apply to department

chairs, as well. They concluded that teacher leaders tend to articulate positive beliefs

towards students, exemplify a professional image, hold the respect and trust of

department members, and confront barriers and problems in the school culture. The study

also found that most teacher leaders, such as department chairs, nurture school success

and translate ideas into actions.

While department chairs have not been cast in a positive light and are often

characterized as underutilized leaders (Weller, 2001), paper pushers, and "racehorses

with plow horse duties" (Axley, 1947, p. 274), they play an integral role in shaping

school climate and increasing student achievement. Department chairs are influential in

enhancing student learning by improving educational effectiveness, implementing

department goals, supporting the organizational structure of the school, and most

importantly, providing instructional leadership to department members (Gmelch &

Schuh, 2004; Schuh & Kuh, 2005).

There are five major roles of department chairs: administrator, leader,

interpersonal counselor, cultivator of school culture, and resource developer. These can

be divided into three areas of responsibilities for department chairs: liaison between the

department teachers and administration; curriculum development and implementation;

and supervision and evaluation of instruction (Graham & Benoit, 2004; Sergiovanni,

1984). Understanding the significance of these five roles is fundamental to a principal's

support offered to department chairs.

Department Chair as Leader

The role of the academic leader has changed over the past two decades from

manager to leader (Barden, 2009; Lucas, 2000), demanding skills in communication,

conflict negotiation, influencing without formal authority, coaching, and problem-

solving. Improving employee performance is a critical leadership component and is a

function of employees' beliefs, values, motivations, skills, knowledge, and work

conditions (Leithwood et al., 2008). Leadership is an important role of department chairs

and has a great impact on student achievement since they project a vision, solicit ideas,

plan curriculum development, and plan and execute department meetings (Gmelch &

Miskin, 2010; Hallinger & Heck, 2002). Successful department chairs "swivel" (Gmelch

& Miskin, 2004, p. 75) between audiences, portraying the same message but using

different approaches and tones, depending on with whom they are speaking. Department

chairs who are able to utilize their colleagues' expertise and share decision-making

responsibilities in a democratic, collegial manner establish trust and respect, which leads

to increased productivity.

 The major roles of the department chair as a leader include (Graham & Benoit,

2004; Spillane et al., 2004):

- Visionary: develops an instructional vision that is consistent with the school's vision; generates consensus among the department through transformational leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 2002);

- Strategic planner: sets long term goals to introduce new programs and other organizational innovations (Ghamrawi, 2010);

- Collaborator: perpetuates a school culture with established norms of trust and collaboration in order for instructional conversations to be productive (Day & Leithwood, 2007);

- Internal advocate: acts as liaison between department and administration;

- Role model: models instructional and varied assessment strategies for department members; leads by example;

- Scholar: possesses expertise in a specific discipline and stays current in that discipline;

- Pedagogical expert: exhibits key characteristics of quality teaching and learning (Ghamrawi, 2010);

- Action researcher: researches teaching methods and techniques (Ghamrawi, 2010); and

- Curriculum and instructional leader: facilitates curriculum development and program redesign; provides formative and summative monitoring of instruction.

Improving teacher quality in order to increase student achievement should be an instructional leader's top priority. While the school community expects principals to be instructional leaders, they are not experts in all disciplines. In fact, Wettersten (1994) found that teachers tend to identify their department chairs and not building principals as their instructional leaders.

Although principals tend to consider themselves instructional leaders because they are able to model a variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs of a diverse population, typically their content knowledge is specific to only one discipline. Therefore, it is logical for a science teacher to look to the science department chair for instructional strategies specific to science and the application of science concepts. Helping teachers develop higher analytical thinking questions in a content area that is not one's strength is extremely challenging and can even be counterproductive.

Not only are instructional leaders expected to coordinate, supervise, and evaluate curriculum and instruction within an academic discipline (Sergiovanni, 1984), they are also expected to excel in their classrooms and mentor departmental peers. Department chairs collect, interpret, and present data to department members in order to facilitate meaningful conversations about student achievement and curriculum effectiveness.

However, department chairs do not have the time to be curriculum and instructional

leaders because they are bogged down by numerous administrative responsibilities.

Department Chair as Administrator

Department chairs represent their academic areas by receiving feedback and input

from department members and communicating accomplishments and concerns to the

principal. Department chairs implement administrative mandates and directives by

communicating policies and tasks to department chairs. The administrative role includes

specific sub-roles, in which success is dependent upon careful attention to organization

and detail (Graham & Benoit, 2004; Spillane et al., 2004):

- Manager: completes administrative and household tasks, such as planning department meetings and keeping minutes of meetings;

- Schedule coordinator: schedules teachers and helps balance teacher loads;

- Report generator: completes administrative paperwork; searches answers to someone else's questions;

- Staff supervisor: hires and supports faculty as educators;

- Professional developer: supports individual and collective professional development and growth;

- Climate controller: establishes a school climate in which behavioral and disciplinary issues do not interfere with instruction; and

- Data manager: collects information on teacher performance and student achievement; helps teachers to understand and use data (Ghamrawi, 2010).

The department chair, in hierarchical terms, is a middle manager that is

responsible to parents, students, building administrators, and district administrators. The

role of the department chair has a dual identity of teacher and administrator, and typically

it is difficult to merge the two. Principals rely heavily on department chairs as middle

managers or quasi-administrators to communicate administrative policy within their departments, to develop and implement curricula, assist in the supervision of teachers' work, and develop and implement school objectives and programming needs.

However, tension and awkwardness develop when teachers and administrators view things differently and can result in department chairs not being fully accepted by either teachers or administrators (Siskin, 1991; Wettersten, 1992). Balancing, shifting, and reframing these relationships can be difficult because if the department chair is too closely linked with administration, the department chair is vulnerable to exclusion from informal relationships (Hord & Murphy, 1985). Therefore, department chairs need authority or influence in order to perform their responsibilities and for department members to comply.

Department Chair as Interpersonal Counselor

Not only are organizational and managerial skills required, department chairs must also employ high-level interpersonal skills because understanding and developing people is a necessary leadership skill (Mintrop & Papazian; 2003). While teachers deal with difficult situations, it is the department chairs they turn to in order to find effective solutions. As Lucas (1986) noted, "An effective department chair supports departmental members, reduces the number and magnitude of problems, and fosters early detection of problems that occur."

In order for teachers to be fully committed to the organization, department chairs should help teachers find fulfillment and satisfaction in their work by connecting with them, learning what motivates them, and treating them as individuals and not as a collective department (Bass, 1990). Department chairs rely on interrelationships and

collaborative partnerships to help individual teachers reach their fullest potential and meet individual needs. An effective department chair develops productive relationships between and among department members in the following sub-roles (Graham & Benoit, 2004):

- Counselor: listens to concerns, offers support, and helps problem solve;

- Coach: inspires and motivates department members to be productive;

- Problem solver: approaches problems positively, flexibly, and intuitively (Ghamrawi, 2010);

- Mediator: resolves complaints and negotiate interpersonal conflicts; and

- Climate regulator: creates an environment that encourages productivity and positive morale.

Department Chair as Cultivator of Subculture

According to Bryk and Schneider (2003), a critical aspect of distributed leadership and a school's success is its organizational culture, which is formed through everyday interactions among students, teachers, and administrators. "The culture of an organization does not merely describe what an organization is like; it describes the essence of the organization itself" (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004, p. 94). The culture of a school or "the way we do things around here" (Barth, 2001) is the glue that holds an organization together and unites people around shared values, assumptions, and beliefs about what works and does not work, which influences daily behavior and shapes the identity of a school. Each department has its own subculture with its own ethnocentric way of looking at things. A school's culture can make or break any initiative since school effectiveness is dependent upon the extent to which beliefs and values are shared among department chairs and within departments, and whether they foster collaboration (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000).

The fundamental focus of organizational culture is on the values and behaviors of the members within the organization, department, or subculture. Understanding the significance of organizational culture is necessary to be maximally effective with school improvement efforts because the process of culture transformation is one in which "a number of people simultaneously face a problematic situation and have to work out a solution together" (Schein, 1985, p. 183):

- Departmental supporter: builds a collaborative, supportive culture; unites the department (Bolman & Deal, 1984);

- Energizer: generates passion and energy for teaching all students (Chow, 2013); and

- Cultural interpreter: understands the school's culture and guides the department in decision-making within a particular situation (Bolman & Deal, 1984).

Since ambiguity can cause stress and impede work production, department chairs need to build a supportive departmental culture and possess the skills to be able to unite their department. Department chairs are instrumental in developing departmental subcultures that build a sense of common purpose, generate energy, and build a collective responsibility for the learning of all students (Chow, 2013), although there are no clear expectations on how to do so effectively.

While department chairs have little control over certain resources, they can influence the group identity and symbolic environment of their department by developing a shared vision through frequent communication and strong interpersonal relationships. Members' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are influenced by a specific sense of identity, loyalty, and pride. This, in turn, increases faculty morale and sustains teacher empowerment. When people have a sense of identity through shared values and culture

(Bolman & Deal, 1984), they feel valued and empowered, which positively influences the school's climate.

Department chairs influence the culture of a school and the quality of education through their roles in the various departments or subcultures. They cultivate a sense of community and commitment by communicating cultural messages about what is important, which in turn instills a collaborative culture, strengthens relationships, and develops cohesiveness (Contractor & Ehrlich, 1993).

Since people interpret events and meaning differently, the department chair's interpretation and understanding of the culture and climate guide the department in decision-making within a particular situation. This is accomplished through sharing values in department meetings, excelling in their classrooms, and mentoring departmental peers. Unfortunately, department chairs are typically not afforded professional development or guidance as to how to form a group identity.

Through past experience, I have witnessed the harm a department chair can do when he/she is unable to unify the department and instill a shared culture and sense of identity, despite the level of authority granted to the position by administration. Lack of mutual respect and a shared vision fragment the department, disconnect relationships, weaken the decision-making process, and prevent goal attainment. When department members do not feel valued, they undermine the department chair by being passive-aggressive (e.g., not following the prescribed curriculum, not implementing learning expectations, missing deadlines). These actions leave the department chair looking unprofessional and unsupported.

Department Chair as Resource Developer

Department chairs can influence the behavior and beliefs of their department members by the authority attached to their position (Sun, Frank, Penuel, & Kim, 2013). This authority provides the capacity to allocate resources, such as time (scheduling), classroom location, and instructional materials. Content knowledge and the ability to teach expertly influence the level of authority received by department members, regardless of the level provided by the hierarchical structure.

The rules or social norms within an organizational culture (see Appendix B), according to Goodenough (1981), determine who gets what and why as competition or collaboration among individuals develop. Time, personnel, and budgetary needs are valuable resources that need to be protected in the following roles:

- Faculty recruiter: hires new teachers that can positively influence the department;

- Faculty developer: plans professional development opportunities that assist in teacher growth;

- Resource warrior: procures and distributes resources, including time, supplementary materials, support, and compensation (Graham & Benoit, 2004);

- Resource manager: creates community partnerships (Ghamrawi, 201); and

- Financier: ensures that allocated resources are spent wisely and within the budget.

Challenges and Benefits of Ambiguity

Just as ambiguity is inherent in distributed leadership (Harris, 2007), it is also inherent in the role of department chairs. Department chairs are often uncertain of the expectations of others, what tasks need to be completed, the priority of those tasks, or how best to perform such tasks. When individuals do not have a clear understanding of their authority or how to complete specific tasks, role ambiguity increases. Tubre and

Collins (2000) posited, "In today's complex work environments, boundaries between occupations, departments, and organizations are often unidentifiable, and blurred roles are especially likely to occur in jobs where the responsibility and performance of job tasks is distributed among team members" (p. 157).

Although the role of department chair is pivotal in the life of a school, the position is riddled with stress, paperwork, and conflict. Poorly written job descriptions, the amount of time needed for administrative duties, the heavy work load, various confrontations and conflicts with colleagues, and the stress on personal time are just a few of the challenges department chairs face.

However, one of the greatest contributing factors to poor departmental leadership is role ambiguity, which can negatively affect faculty morale, work productivity, ability to collaborate, and student achievement (Gomes & Knowles, 1999). Ever changing expectations, loosely coupled schools, and continuously redefined school leadership increase ambiguity. Complex school-based problems and technical, evolving mandates further add to unrest and lack of clarity. Vague goals, inadequate professional development, insufficient resources, and lack of common objectives by building and district administrators also contribute to role ambiguity.

Complications and questions arise when specific responsibilities and expectations are not communicated or delineated: What are department chairs' responsibilities in the teacher evaluation process? How much weight do their recommendations carry in the hiring process? Who assists teachers in developing and analyzing District Determined Measures? How are decisions made within departments? How are conflicts resolved? How can department chairs be effective instructional leaders? Such questions

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demonstrate the complexities of distributed leadership. In order to avoid certain outcomes of poor leadership, such as job dissatisfaction, reduced commitment, burnout, loss of self-esteem, and early departure from the profession (Calderhead, 2001), it is necessary to address the ambiguity that is inherent in the role of department chair.

Role ambiguity is defined as a lack of clear information about job expectations and responsibilities, including what should be done (*expectation ambiguity*), when it should be done (*priority ambiguity*), how it should be done (*process ambiguity*), and behaviors that should be exhibited (*behavior ambiguity*) (Singh, Verbke, & Rhoads, 1996). Since the role of the department chair is defined through expectations voiced or implied by administration and department members, misinterpretations and oversight occur. When department chairs are unclear or have varying opinions of what those expectations are, the ambiguity of their role influences relationships, which tasks are completed, and how decisions are made within departments. Department chairs get stymied by their titles and unwritten expectations and responsibilities, when in fact ambiguity encourages self-efficacy and allows for creative, outside of the box thinking (Donlan, 2014; Savelsbergh et al., 2012; Weick, 1976).

The position of the department chair is often misunderstood and vague, resulting in negative effects on department chairs' physical and mental health (Aggarwal, Rochford & Vaidyanathan, 2005; Calderhead, 2001; Gomes & Knowles, 1999). Literature shows that conflicts in role perceptions manifest and are commonly thought to affect organizational performance in a negative way due to the probability of job dissatisfaction and anxiety (Fisher & Gitelson, 1983; Mehta et al., 2010; Owens & Valesky, 2007). While role ambiguity is likely to exist in most jobs to a certain degree

and may be beneficial in increasing employee creativity (Salvesbergh et al., 2012), a high degree of ambiguity can cause stress, frustration, burnout, and lowered career aspirations (Tubre & Collins, 2000). Many studies have confirmed that high levels of role conflict strongly correlate with increased absenteeism, increased job turnover, and decreased efficiency and productivity (Coll & Rice, 1990). Studies conducted by Fisher and Gitelson (1983) and Jackson and Schuler (1985) revealed role ambiguity and role conflict are widespread in decision-making bodies and lead to a decreased level of commitment and involvement within the group or job. The effects of job dissatisfaction can be disastrous on the work climate and productivity. Incomplete or improper work production and the spreading rumors and ill can lead to intentional sabotage and low morale (Bauer, 2000).

Many department chairs are poorly equipped to deal with the responsibilities and stress involved in being a department chair and few are afforded adequate training. While many researchers advocate for professional development and support to address role ambiguity, the lack of time, resources, or appropriate training prevent schools from addressing the complexities of role ambiguity.

Since roles and tasks are complex and ever changing, leadership activities will never have complete transparency. By its very nature, change produces ambiguity. According to Burke and Church (1992), "if change in organizations is becoming the rule rather than the exception, it is evident that one of the skills needed to manage change effectively is the ability to work in and within ambiguous situations and environments" (p. 310).

There are benefits to ambiguity, as well, which foster effective role performance and task completion, supporting distributed leadership. In a study Burke and Church conducted, modest results showed that those with a greater tolerance for ambiguity were better at understanding important aspects about managing change, which successfully requires the ability to embrace change and think in long-range, inspiring, and visionary modes (Harrison, 1980). Loose coupling, which allows schools to integrate multiple and conflicting goals by offering department chairs the flexibility and wiggle room to work harmoniously or retain autonomy in certain situations, further cultivates role ambiguity (Aurini, 2012; Weick, 1976). Ambiguity provides flexibility that is necessary to meet all of the demands of the school, as well as the freedom and leeway needed to be effective leaders in complex times, tapping into specific knowledge and skill sets when necessary. Ambiguity supports discretion for department chairs, allowing them to follow a path they deem most appropriate for any situation. By working collaboratively with like-minded individuals with a high sense of self-efficacy, department chairs have confidence to try new strategies. Principals should embrace ambiguity for its benefits: fostering perseverance, creative problem solving, adaptability, self-determination and support for distributed leadership (Weick, 1976).

positive outcomes (creativity, adaptability, collaborative problem-solving)

positive influential factors (self-efficacy, motivation, organizational commitment?

theoretical constructs (social constructivism, activity theory, role theory, social cognitive theory)
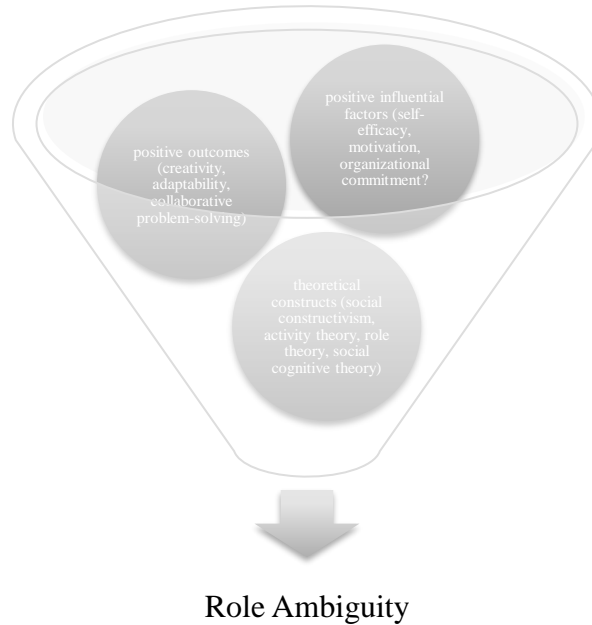
Role Ambiguity

Figure 2.1. The Importance of Ambiguity

Theoretical Foundation

According to Rossman and Rallis (2012), "Theories inform our experiences; they guide what we look at, listen for and reinform our theories" (p. 121). Concepts referring to behavioral dispositions, such as attitudes and personality traits, have played an important role in attempts to explain human behavior (Sherman & Fazio, 1983) but often overlook the importance of social context. The basis of my conceptual framework is that in any given situation, interactions between people influence what should, could, and does happen. Since people learn from one another in any situation, these interactions shape perceptions, values, norms, and decisions. In order to understand how principals can harness ambiguity and enhance the leadership capacity of department chairs, it is critical to understand the various concepts that have contributed to the theoretical underpinnings of this study.

DL:

Social Constructivism & Activity Theory (how experiences and interactions shape learning and school

Role of DC

Organizational leadership by principal (transformational and situational)

Principal's and DC's Level of self-efficacy, motivation, and organizational commitment; expectations of self, by principal
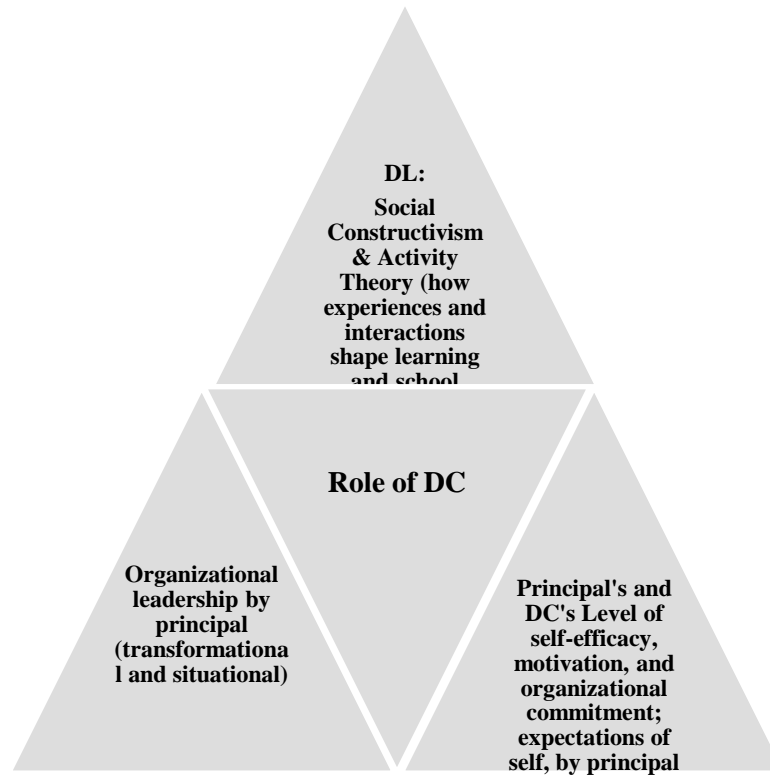
Figure 2.2. Conceptual Framework: Determining Factors in the Perceptions Regarding Ambiguity

Social Constructivism and Activity Theory

While there are many theoretical perspectives on distributed leadership, the conceptual framework for this study integrates Spillane's (2006) and Elmore's (2000) perspectives. The epistemology and theoretical anchors of distributed leadership are *social constructivism and activity theory*, which are frequently referenced when analyzing behavior due to their stress on social relationships and collaboration. Both of these theories stress how social context influences learning and human interactions, which are "distributed in the interactive web of actors, artifacts, and the situation" (Spillane, et al., 2001). How an individual acts in any given situation is dependent on the

information gleamed from interactions, which can alter a person's perspective, values, norms, and decisions. Drawing on these theories, the distributed leadership framework focuses more on leadership practice than defined roles.

Why does every department chair's perception toward shared decision-making and role ambiguity differ? According to Creswell (2009), *social constructivism* (Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky) is based on the credence that every individual has his or her own unique interpretation of events and experiences, which is influenced by his or her interactions, social norms, and situational context. Constructivism is premised on the belief that learners actively create, interpret, and reorganize knowledge in individual ways (Windschitl, 1999). Each new experience shapes perspectives and behaviors with stress placed on social relationships and interactions (Jaworski, 1995). Since these social interactions are the basis for constructing knowledge, people learn best in social or group settings, which promote collaboration, collective problem-solving, and sharing of ideas. Since groups collaboratively construct knowledge from each other through shared meaning, department chairs are more productive when working collaboratively than when working in isolation.

This framework focuses on the interplay between people and events. According to Lambert (2002), leadership should be viewed within the context of processes, activities, and relationships. The leadership capacity of a school is enhanced when people learn together, share a common vision or goal, and collaboratively work toward specific goals. By defining leadership as constructivist learning, Lambert (1998) emphasizes that,

> …Leadership is about learning together, and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively. It involves opportunities to surface and mediate perceptions, values, beliefs, information, and assumptions through continuing conversations; to inquire about and

generate ideas together; to reflect upon common beliefs…and to create actions that grow out of these new understandings. Such is the core of leadership. (pp. 5-6)

This study is grounded in Lambert's (2002) essential assumptions of leadership:

1. Individuals' participation in leadership roles is established through the school's definition and framework of leadership;

2. Leadership is the collective responsibility of all school community members;

3. An adult learning environment is critical in the growth of leadership;

4. The principal's primary role is orchestrating and planning opportunities for skillful participation of school members; and

5. Educators are deliberate in their actions, and leaders recognize the value of deliberation.

While much of the literature pertaining to social constructivism examines teacher-student relationships, the theory is also applicable to adult learners. The school setting is a very social place for students and faculty. As Piaget (1975) noted, since meaning is largely constructed internally, new information is often distorted to fit existing conceptions. Therefore, it is critical for a person to interact and become active partners in the construction of his/ her learning.

Similar to a classroom, a principal must allow influences other than lecturing to faculty to shape their views while constructing new, shared, contextually relevant concepts. Just as principals utilize individuals' strengths and expertise to build leadership capacity, constructivists strongly believe in highlighting strengths and interests (Greene & Gredler, 2002) to enhance learning. Problem-based learning is encouraged because it provides many opportunities to express understanding. Utilizing multiple sources of information and providing many opportunities to present one's own ideas and reflect on the ideas of others is an empowering experience (Brooks & Brooks, 1999) and supports the constructivist views.

Principals must also employ modeling and coaching in order to support individual teachers just as classroom teachers support students. Vygotsky's best known concept *zone of proximal development* argues that an individual can learn from someone who is more advanced and can therefore master concepts and ideas that he/ she cannot understand on their own. The principal and department chairs work together and use their collective wisdom to develop a shared understanding (construction of knowledge) of the expectations and tasks at hand, mindful of the social context in which this information is made available. Through this shared relationship develops a shared purpose and responsibility, as well as a reorganization of power and authority (Lambert, 1998).

Activity theory incorporates ideas of learning, behavior, and development from a variety of theorists, including Dewey and Strauss (Engestrom & Miettinen, 1999). An important tenet of activity theory and my theoretical framework is that role based leadership is poorly aligned to the realities of working in a school, which is complex and ever changing. Therefore, leadership that is distributed is woven and grounded in activity rather than position or role. Since there are continual interactions, everyone is accountable in meeting goals and expectations. An activity is impacted by a wide range of factors that work together, such as how labor is divided, what rules are being followed, and the social context of a given situation. However, one individual's actions can influence the entire system, which is explained by Diamond (n.d) through the use of a metaphor of landing a plane, shifting the unit of analysis from the individual to the event (Spillane and Sherer, 2004):

> Think of the cockpit of an airplane- the people in the cockpit, the instrument panel, the people who are trying to help the plane land- and try to think about the activity of landing the plane not as something an individual person does, not as something the instrument panel does

without the people, not as something a pilot could do without the air traffic controller. Try to think about the whole activity system. (pp. 3-4)

Since individuals have the ability to react to and alter conditions, the concept of power is closely associated with activity theory.

Organizational Leadership Theories

In order to fully understand how a principal or department chairs interact with faculty, how decisions are made, problems solved, and a positive culture built, it is important to understand specific organizational leadership theories, in particular, transformational and situational leadership. *The "Four I's"* of transformational leadership enhance morale and motivation by connecting with faculty and their sense of identity to a project, as well as the collective identity of an organization. It assists leaders in determining what is in the best interest for individuals and the group as a whole. Since adaptability is a critical skill necessary to manage complex situations and ambiguity, *situational leaders* change their leadership style to match department chairs' willingness to perform certain tasks, as well as the needs and strengths of each department chair (Marzano et al., 2005).

Effectiveness of leadership is defined by the interactions of leaders and followers, and understanding the personalities and circumstances of the followers in a way that will bring out the best in people (Smith & Piele, 2006). Increasing productivity by enhancing interpersonal relationships is conceptualized in leadership theories and critical for principals and department chairs to utilize in order to maximize distributed leadership. While there are four broad categories within the leadership spectrum (trait, transactional, situational, and transformational), my conceptual framework incorporates the dimensions

of transformational leadership and situational leadership, theories in which success relies

heavily upon social interactions, relationships, and assumptions about work ethics

(Owens, 2004).

The Four Dimensions of Transformational Leadership Theory

Motivating followers to achieve goals and using non-coercive power to empower

department chairs to work for the overall good of the school is a vital component of

transformational leadership (Rost, 1991). Relationships and interactions between leaders

and followers are at the crux of transformational leadership, which focuses on the

connections formed between leaders and followers through interpersonal skills, influence,

as well as trial and error. Currie and Lockett (2007) state that transformational leadership

is a style sensitive to differences and best suited for meeting the needs of followers.

Transformational leaders who inspire followers to change expectations, perceptions, and

motivation to work towards a common goal have higher levels of performance and

satisfaction than groups led by other types of leaders (Riggio, 2009).

Principals who are transformational leaders significantly influence the school's

effectiveness in attaining desired organizational outcomes because they change the

culture of the school by focusing on the inspirational and motivational aspects of their

relationship with their faculty and encouraging teachers and department chairs to go

beyond the basic expectations required of them (Bass, 1990; Kirby, Paradise & King,

1992). "They broaden the interests of departments by generating awareness and

acceptance of the purpose and mission of the group, and encourage individuals to look

beyond their own self-interest and expand extra effort for the good of the group" (Bass,

1990, p. 20). Charisma, intellectual stimulation, and follower perceptions of the leader's

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effectiveness are key traits in transformational leaders and indirectly effect student outcomes (Kirby, Paradise, & King, 1992).

The ability to differentiate between power, authority, and influence is a major component of transformational theory. According to Snowden and Gorton (2002), while a leader has the power and authority to make decisions within an organization, the transformational leader relies heavily on influence. Through influence, a principal is able to encourage department chairs to work longer hours, inspire them to go beyond expectations, and cultivate their leadership. Power is shared through collaboration and influence.

Much research has been completed connecting transformational leadership with various outcomes, such as increased commitment and satisfaction (Walumba, Avolio, Gardener, Wernsing & Peterson, 2008), autonomy (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006), self-efficacy, and cohesion (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003). Transformational principals also positively influence organizational commitment by de-emphasizing their roles as operational leaders and encouraging department chairs to self-manage.

Experience has proven to me that teachers and department chairs relish autonomy and respect. When department chairs are motivated to be effective leaders by their building principal, they expand more energy and are more willing to share decision-making responsibility with others. Unfortunately, principals who lack transformational leadership skills can negatively affect faculty morale and the school's overall effectiveness in increasing student achievement.

Researcher Bass (1990) developed the most widely used transformational leadership theory and theorized that leaders would be more likely to transform beliefs,

attitudes, and behaviors to create change if they exhibit certain qualities and characteristics:

Intellectual Stimulation: (IS) The leader is able to guide followers to try creative new things, think outside of the box, and explore new ways of doing things. The leader constantly challenges followers to higher levels of performance by questioning assumptions, encouraging reflection, reframing problems, challenging assumptions, and approaching old situations in new ways through creativity and innovativeness. The leader provides resources and information to help followers see discrepancies between current and desired practices. Individual and collective efficacy is raised when principals encourage and guide department chairs to challenge assumptions and take risks.

Individualized Consideration: (IC) This category addresses the way leaders treat those they influence. Open lines of communication are needed to offer support and encouragement. The leader must provide a supportive environment and personal attention to each follower's needs in order to bring out his or her very best efforts. For example, Maureen recognizes that one department chair is really uncomfortable with conflict and confrontation of any kind. Therefore, when department members complain about scheduling, she intercedes on his behalf since she understands that this is a weakness of his. Principals fulfill this role when they act as mentors and coaches to department chairs while trying to assist them in reaching their desired outcomes. Followers' thoughts are valued (Tourish & Pinnington, 2002) in a supportive environment in which individual needs and differences are respected (Bass, 2000).

Inspirational Motivation: (IM) Performance is increased through the creation of team spirit (Hall, Johnson, Wysocki, & Kepner, 2002). This category is "descriptive of

leaders who communicate a clear vision and high expectations to followers, and inspire them through motivation to become committed to and a part of a shared vision of the organization" (Northouse, 2016, p. 183). Leaders provide IM when they provide meaning and challenge, act enthusiastically, and support team spirit (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999). Principals fulfill this role when they motivate and inspire department chairs to experience passion, while offering continual support and encouragement.

Idealized Influence: (II) The leader must act as a role model for high ethical behavior, while instilling pride, respect, and trust. When the leader is trusted and respected, he is considered a strong, charismatic role model to be emulated, providing followers with a vision and sense of mission. The leader can "walk the talk" and is therefore respected. Principals who are perceived to have a strong presence are able to articulate a vision and speak with authority (Bogler, 2001).

There are many studies that support the benefits of relations-oriented leadership behaviors. Seltzer & Bass (1990) conducted a study of 138 subordinates of managers who were also part-time MBA students. Positive correlations were reported between transformational leadership, in particular individualized consideration, and three outcome areas: subordinates' perceptions of leader effectiveness; subordinates' extra effort; and subordinates' satisfaction. Howell & Avolio (1993) examined the effects of transformational leadership behaviors on business goals using a sample of 78 managers. Charisma, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, all of which are transformational leadership behaviors, were all positively correlated with performance.

It is easy for department chairs to be stuck in a rut, teach the same classes day in and day out, and attend meetings by being silent participants. A principal can rejuvenate

department chairs by utilizing these key components. Department chairs want to be given

the chance to succeed and relish being challenged and stimulated. They are willing to

complete certain tasks if they see their principal is willing to do so, as well. Department

chairs need to be encouraged to explore and share new ways of doing things, such as

bringing in specific technology to enhance research skills or trying new instructional

strategies.
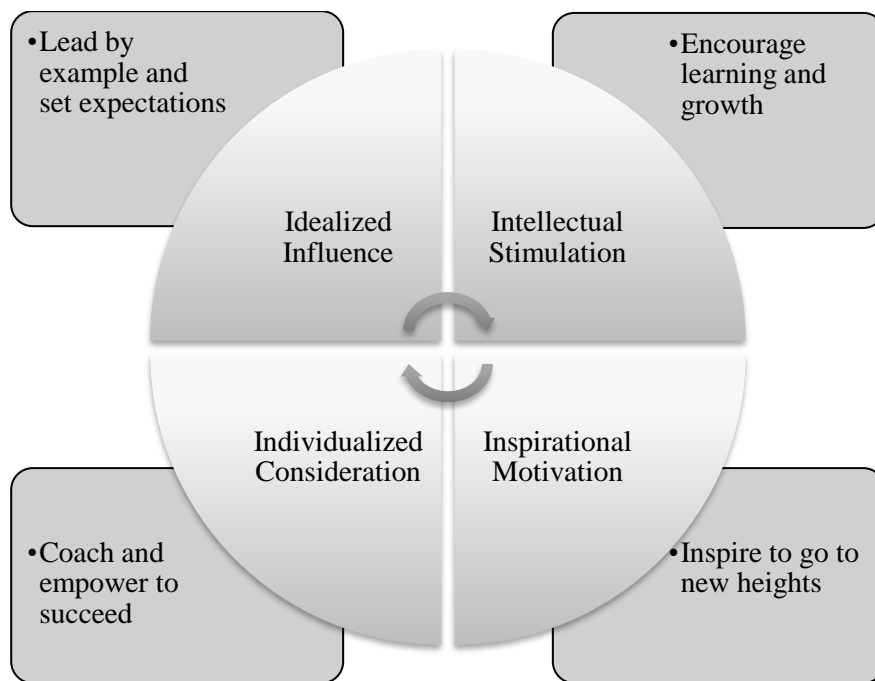
Figure 2.3. 4 Dimensions of Transformational Leadership

"The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority."
(Blanchard, 2012)

Situational Leadership Theory

Good leaders know that any given situation could require a different approach to

leadership, flexibility, and a willingness to change their style to handle complex

situations as they arise (Fullan, 2007; Snowden & Gorton, 2002). Hersey and Blanchard's (1969) situational leadership theory is based on the readiness level of followers and the extent to which followers have the ability and willingness to accomplish specific tasks, which affects the leader's choice of leadership style. The leader implements a different style of leadership for each of the four readiness levels, combining task and relationship behaviors. Since there is not one leadership style that meets everyone's needs or "fits all sizes", successful principals change their leadership style to match department chairs' needs, strengths, maturity, and willingness to perform certain tasks (Marzano et al., 2005). Adaptable to any environment, principals use situational leadership to place more or less emphasis on a task and more or less emphasis on relationships, depending on what is needed to get the job done successfully (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano, & Dennison, 2003; Hersey et al., 2012). Hersey & Blanchard focus on four main leadership styles, which are presupposed on the developmental level of the workers:

- <u>Directing or telling</u>: leaders tell people what to do and how to do it because the leader has complete control over the situation; best used when decisions must be made quickly and efficiently; emphasizes high task and limited relationship behavior;

- <u>Selling</u>: leaders provide information, direction and sell their message; most effective when the follower is motivated but possesses less than average ability (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004); emphasizes high amounts of task and relationship behavior;

- <u>Supporting or participating</u>: leaders use this approach to gain buy-in and consensus from the group; team members are included in the decision-making process; leaders focus more on creativity and the relationships than tasks, which can slow the decision-making process; emphasizes high amounts of relationship behavior but low amount of task behavior; and

- <u>Empowering or delegating:</u> leaders monitor progress and provide regular feedback but allow people to work on their own; most responsibility is passed to the team members who have the complete freedom to make decisions; emphasizes low levels of task and relationship behaviors.

Supporting	Coaching
Praise, listen and facilitate	*Direct and support*
For people who have:	For people who have:
High competence and variable commitment	Some competence and some commitment
Empowering	Directing
Turn over responsibility	*Structure, control and supervise*
For people who have:	For people who have:
High competence and high commitment	Low competence and high commitment

↑ **Supportive behavior**

Directive behavior →

Figure 2.4. Situational Approach to Leadership (Blanchard, 2000)

Hambleton & Gumpert (1982) found that when supervisors of 189 employees applied the Hersey & Blanchard model in a study of situational leadership, employees' job performance increased. Effective principals need to be flexible and, depending on the context and situation, use the style that is most appropriate. Appropriate direction and support from the principal can help each department chair grow as an educator and leader for their department.

Role Theory

Role theory (Mead), as it relates to organizational leadership, is how a leader and followers define their own roles, define the role of others, how people act in their roles, and how people expect others to act in their roles within an organization (Ogawa &

Bossert, 1995; Turner, 2001). This theory focuses on the interactions between followers'

ability and leadership style.

Departmental relationships are built upon shared beliefs, working together to

attain goals, sharing and expanding knowledge, and maintaining trust. However, strong

relationships and effective distributed leadership are difficult to attain when varied

perceptions of power and context are present (Ferris, Fink, Galang, Zhou, Kacmar, &

Howard, 1996). Since distributed leadership is grounded in activity, knowledge and

practice get stretched across roles rather than being inherent in one role. Similarly, role

theory argues that expectations for roles will differ across time, situation, and person

(Turner, 2001), and that uncertainty can negatively impede task completion. Role theory

also explains how department chairs' perceptions of their roles influence their leadership

styles, priorities, expectations, behaviors, and interactions.

The definition of *role* emphasizes the different set of tasks and activities expected

of those in social or organizational positions (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Turner, 2001).

Since the origins of *role* came from the scripts memorized by stage actors, Biddle and

Thomas (1966) applied role theory to real life using the stage analogy:

> Individuals in society occupy positions, and their performance in these roles
> is determined by social norms, demands, and rules; by the role
> performances of others in their respective positions; by those who observe
> and react to the performance; and by the individual's capabilities and
> personalities. (p. 4)

Every job has a set of prescribed activities or roles with potential behaviors. Literature

states that there can be a "kaleidoscopic shifting of roles", which suggests that a person's

views about their own roles or those of others can change. Any feature of an organization

that is able to provide role expectations, requirements, or pressures to a specific

individual is referred to as a *role set*. A department chair's role set usually includes the principal, other department chairs, department members, and other teachers or staff with whom the department chair works closely.

The school as an organization provides additional demands and expectations, which influence a department chair's behavior and actions. These demands and constraints will differ even within the same job depending on the perceptions of the individual department chair (Yukl, 2006). Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn and Smoek (1964) define *role expectations* as the degree to which all members of a role set develop beliefs and attitudes about what the department chair should and should not do as part of his/ her role. Additional influences and pressures, such as community expectations or low standardized scores, are intended to bring conformity throughout all department chairs (Shivers-Blackwell, 2004).

People are willing to accept roles because they provide important psychological benefits, such as increased self-esteem, status, and ego gratification (William & Alliger, 1994). Although roles can inhibit flexibility and adaptability in fulfilling responsibilities, benefits include set limits on employee behavior, standardized behavior, and established authority relationships (Bess & Dee, 2008). Moreover, department chairs are more likely to be engaged and committed to their roles if their added responsibilities are structured into their school day (Bartlett, 2004). Conversely, department chairs can become exhausted and overwhelmed when additional duties and responsibilities are expected to be met on their own time. Since some department chairs have a difficult time discerning where their commitments and responsibilities should start and end, the lack of clarity in expectations and demands is problematic.

An important aspect of role theory is the potential for individuals to experience conflict in the various roles they are expected to fulfill. Since department chairs are affected by relationships of purposes, power, and social interaction (Woods, 1983), a department chair's position frequently involves conflict with colleagues. Since people hold different values, beliefs, and norms, role conflict is bound to occur. Also, the mere presence of positional power granted to department chairs does not guarantee results.

Self-Efficacy

In order to succeed, people need a sense of self-efficacy, struggle together with resilience to meet the inevitable obstacles and inequities of life. (Bandura, 1997)

The foundation of principals' and department chairs' capacity to effectively lead in schools entails the realization of self- identity, capabilities, and limitations; understanding of role and school culture, and affirmation of one's perceptions. A person's sense of self-efficacy can play a major role in how one behaves and approaches goals, tasks, and challenges (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005), as well as the level of motivation and endurance sustained during a given task. Self-efficacy, a component of Bandura's social cognitive theory, is the extent of a person's belief in his/ her own ability to complete specific tasks, responsibilities, or goals or achieve specific outcomes. These beliefs influence one's actions, decisions, decision-making process, and leadership styles. It is critical to understand that an individual has the ability to influence one's own actions and must be applied through current leadership research.

Perceived self-efficacy influences an individual's behavior in many ways. It is a temporary and easy to influence characteristic that is solely situational and task oriented (Lenz & Shortridge-Baggett, 2002). Self-efficacy increases when an individual

successfully masters a skill, observes others successfully completing tasks, or receives positive feedback from completing a task. People with strong efficacious outlooks approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered, not threats to be avoided. Personal well-being, accomplishments, departmental relationships, and flexibility in the search of solutions are enhanced through a strong sense of self-efficacy. Woolfolk-Hoy and Hoy (2003) have offered a compelling observation: "Teachers with a higher sense of self-efficacy are more motivated, more likely to take broad views, set more challenging goals, and are less afraid of failure, and find new strategies when old ones fail" (p. 128). They visualize successful outcomes and do not dwell on personal failures or task avoidance. However, if people doubt their capabilities or expect negative outcomes from their actions, they defeat themselves and therefore will not effectively carry out tasks. Bandura (1997) argues the most beneficial efficacy judgments are those that slightly exceed what one can do at a given time because it leads people to undertake realistically challenging tasks and provide motivation for self-development.

According to Bandura (1997), there are four types of efficacy. The first type of efficacy, *mastery experience*, occurs when someone experiences success as a result of effort. It is important to note that if people experience easy successes with quick results, they are just as easily discouraged by failure and setbacks. *Vicarious experience*, the second type of efficacy, occurs by comparing the abilities of others to oneself, through observing successful results from other's experience. "Seeing people similar to oneself succeed by sustained effort raises observers' beliefs that they too possess the capabilities needed to succeed," claimed Bandura (1997, p. 72). Therefore, when principals model self-efficacy, department chairs observe and learn skills and strategies to manage

challenging demands. *Social persuasion* occurs when someone is told they can or cannot

perform a specific task due to their ability. People's skills are strengthened through verbal

persuasion when they are encouraged to try harder and told that they are capable of

performing difficult tasks. Lastly, one's own stress and pressure about performing a task

stems from a *person's physiological and affective state.* When people interpret stress,

tension, and anxiety as weaknesses, they are vulnerable to poor performance. If principals

can reduce department chairs' stress and anxiety, their self-beliefs of efficacy will

improve. Therefore, it is critical for principals to be able to recognize from where

department chairs' sources of efficacy emerge so that they can carry out their duties

effectively. According to Pajares and Schunk,

> Studies have shown self-efficacy to influence one's choices, persistence,
> and engagement. Individuals with a higher sense of efficacy tend to be
> more accomplished than those with a low sense of self-efficacy, and find
> goal setting to be a less difficult task. Individuals with high efficacy
> beliefs view complex or difficult tasks as a way to surpass expectations;
> on the other hand, individuals with low efficacy view complexity as a
> quick route to failure and disappointment. (pp. 34-35)

Since actions and inactions are directly related to self-efficacy, department chairs

need to believe they can accomplish any necessary tasks to meet job requirements, a form

of self-efficacy that is task specific. Efficacy beliefs influence behavior, and according to

Bandura (1997), are the most powerful predictors of behavior and how one acts in a

situation, resolves conflicts, or simply performs a skill. The course of action an individual

chooses to pursue, the degree of effort made, the extent of perseverance in the face of

setbacks, and the amount of anxiety experienced is influenced by self-efficacy (Bandura,

1997). Accomplishments are important because success builds one's personal efficacy,

while failures undermine it. "In order to gain a sense of self-efficacy, a person can

complete a skill successfully, observe someone else doing a task successfully, acquire positive feedback about completing a task, or rely on physiological cues" (Zulkosky, 2009, p. 93).

A strong sense of self-efficacy can leverage ambiguity. Self-efficacy is closely linked with role ambiguity due to the broad range of work-relevant outcomes, including improved performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Fisher & Gitelson, 1983; Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Tubre & Collins, 2000). The modeling of desired behavior is the key to increasing one's self-efficacy. Department chairs' confidence increases when a principal models a strong sense of self-efficacy, allowing them to feel capable of successfully completing tasks, trying new strategies, and circumventing role ambiguity. The stronger the self-efficacy beliefs, the greater the challenge individuals are willing to undertake (Pajares & Schunk, 2001). Bandura (2000) encouraged efficacy in school leadership by stating, "When faced with obstacles or setbacks…those with a strong belief in their capabilities will redouble their efforts to master the challenge" (p. 120).

Table 2.2. How Theories Influence Distributed Leadership and Ambiguity

Theory	Principle	Is ambiguity viewed as a benefit, detriment or both?	Why?
Social Constructivism	Social context influences learning and human interactions (Spillane et al., 2001)	Benefit	Stress is placed on social relationships; collaboration leads to productivity
	Interpretation of events is influenced by experiences, interactions, and social norms	Benefit	Focus is on leadership practice, not roles or positions (Spillane, 2006)

Activity Theory	Leadership is distributed and disseminated across activity, not positions; enabled and constrained by social factors	Benefit	A wide range of factors work together to impact an activity
	Building leadership capacity is a collective task because people can learn from each other	Benefit	Momentum is created to achieve goals and school improvements
Loose Coupling	Provides flexibility and wiggle room to work harmoniously or retain autonomy in certain situations	Both	Some theorists argue that loose coupling does not provide enough structure; others view flexibility as a benefit
Role Theory	Expectations for roles will differ across time, situation, and person (Turner, 2001)	Both	These demands and constraints will differ even within the same job depending on the perceptions of the individual department chair (Yukl, 2006)
	Leadership positions provide additional demands and expectations, which influence a department chair's behavior and actions	Both	Uncertainty and ill-defined roles negatively impede task completion; explains how department chairs' perceptions of their roles influence their leadership styles, priorities, expectations, behaviors, and interactions
Self-efficacy	Closely associated with ambiguity	Benefit	Department chairs are inspired to take risks to try new tasks and strategies, circumventing role ambiguity
	A person's sense of self-efficacy can play a major role in how one approaches goals, tasks, and challenges (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005)	Benefit	Broad range of work-relevant outcomes, including improved performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment
	People will use behavioral strategies, practices and self-regulating techniques, such as goal setting and time management to move	Benefit	If great sense of self-efficacy, motivation and endurance will be sustained during tasks

	them towards desired outcomes (Bandura, 1997)		
	The most beneficial efficacy judgments are those that slightly exceed what one can do at a given time	Benefit	Desired outcome realized
	Efficacy beliefs influence behavior and are the most powerful predictors of behavior (Bandura, 1997)	Benefit	People undertake realistically challenging tasks and provide motivation for self-development
	When faced with obstacles or setbacks…those with a strong belief in their capabilities will redouble their efforts (Bandura, 2000)	Benefit	Department chairs need to believe they can accomplish any necessary tasks to meet job requirements
Motivation	Drive for success and self-fulfillment are key elements	Benefit	Department chairs wish to be active players in the school, have an impact on what is going on, feel that they have a high status within it, and are willing to contribute beyond what is expected of them (Bogler & Somech, 2004)
	Basic needs or desires must be satisfied (York, 1976)	Benefit	When self-actualizing, individual is reaching their fullest potential
		Detriment	If individual has safety or physical needs, individual cannot be self-fulfilled or grow
Organizational Commitment	Leadership and ability to participate in authentic decision-making process have a direct effect on employees' organizational commitment (Nguni, Sleegers, & Denessena, 2006)		

	One possesses organizational commitment when he/she is loyal to the school; believes and accepts the school's goals and values; and exerts effort on behalf of the school	Benefit	Organizational commitment is critical for organizational effectiveness (Dee et al., 2006)

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH AND METHODS

This study used an ethnographic qualitative approach, relying on a descriptive single case study strategy of inquiry. This research provided insight into how a principal extols distributed leadership in her daily practice, how key challenges are addressed, how relationships are managed, and how ambiguity is managed in certain situations. An examination of the role of school culture on distributed or shared leadership occurred, as well.

Since role ambiguity can impede task completion and influence interpersonal relationships, my research explored the role of ambiguity in the functioning of distributed leadership. Since research supports that modeling self-efficacy, motivation, and organizational commitment while offering targeted support improves morale, school culture, and student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 2009; Leithwood et al., 004), I posit that a principal can use these same values and beliefs to enhance leadership capacity while harnessing ambiguity.

Although role ambiguity will not be reduced, the results of this study have important implications for the practice and leadership effectiveness of principals and department chairs. This research identified specific principles and provided detailed examples of distributed leadership in practice, which can assist administrators to accept ambiguity not as a stigma but as an asset and necessary adaptive skill. This study supports a paradigm shift, allowing principals and department chairs to utilize the benefits of ambiguity, such as creativity, "thinking outside of the box", intrinsic motivation, work commitment, synergy, flexibility, and collaboration in order to

effectively complete tasks. Since the principal's utilization of situational and

transformational leadership positively contributed to the culture of the school, practicing

certain leadership theories can assist in the successful implementation of distributed

leadership, as well. Being a reflective practitioner, I hope to further implement the

theoretical constructs explored in this research, as well as learn additional strategies that

will assist in building the leadership capacity of my own department chairs.

This chapter provides a detailed description of the methodological approaches and

research design utilized in this study. The research plan within this chapter is organized

into several sections to provide a framework for a qualitative single case study: rationale

for an ethnographic study, research questions, participants and sampling procedures,

instrumentation (semi-structured open ended interviews, direct nonparticipatory

observations, surveys, analysis of site documents, and field notes), data collection and

data analysis processes, limitations, verification of findings, and ethical considerations.

Rationale for Ethnographic Qualitative Study

While a relatively new phenomenon in education, qualitative research strives to

obtain a clearer understanding and bring meaning to a particular phenomenon, by

interpreting and understanding participants' experiences, points of view, interactions, and

perceptions within a natural setting (Bogden & Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 2003; Merriam,

2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2012) through the lens of the researcher. Qualitative

methodology is holistic, interpretive, naturalistic, and contextual (Creswell, 2009; Stake,

2000), and according to Rossman and Rallis (2012), recognizes that an individual enters a

context with personal perspective that informs their actions.

In this particular study, a qualitative exploration was deemed appropriate due to the examination of human behavior and organizational learning, complexity of distributed leadership, the limited amount of existing research on the acceptance and benefits of ambiguity, and the need to obtain a holistic view of multiple perspectives within the context of a school setting. According to McCaslin and Scott (2003), qualitative research must be "intricately blended as a holistic mural rather than merely assembled side by side in a paint-by-number fashion" (p. 448). This method was chosen because qualitative research is known for its virtue of openness (Rossman & Rallis, 2012), and the ability to document chance happenings that lead to significant discoveries. A qualitative design allowed me to reconstruct questions to get a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied, using my interpersonal skills and interactions to understand participants' perspectives (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

Several researchers have summarized the essence of qualitative research through seven basic assumptions (Creswell, 2003; Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2012), which support my rationale for a qualitative study:

1. Qualitative researchers are concerned more with process than findings and outcomes;

2. Qualitative researchers are interested in how participants make sense of their experiences in specific contextual settings and the meaning of phenomena;

3. Qualitative researchers, as human instruments, are the primary agent of data collection and analysis;

4. The qualitative process requires fieldwork, one in which the researcher observes the phenomena in the natural setting;

5. Qualitative research is descriptive and inductive in nature;

6. Qualitative research allows the researcher to bring his own views and beliefs to the writing of the study; and

7. Qualitative research is emergent rather than tightly prefigured.

Qualitative research has, however, been criticized for relying too heavily upon the researcher, questioning subjectivity bias (Patton, 2002). It has also been criticized for being anecdotal, impressionistic, interpretive, and unsystematic (Rossman & Rallis, 2012; Strauss & Glaser, 1970).

Ethnography refers to any qualitative research where the intent is to provide thick, rich description of everyday life and practice of a community or culture. The ethnographer, whose aim is cultural interpretation, explains how events and details may represent "webs of meaning" or "webs of significance" (Geertz, 1973). Ethnographic researchers utilize observations as a primary method of data collection, notice interesting features of a specific culture, look for patterns and meaning, and try to make sense of social relationships and context (Parthasarathy, 2008; Zemliansky, 2008). For example, what does the principal believe and value? How do these beliefs and values shape her practice, interactions, and understanding of distributed leadership? How does her leadership style influence how leadership and power are distributed?

Since I observed situations and analyzed opportunities where leadership was distributed within a school's marking period, this research was conducted within a short, limited time span. Although ethnographers spend extended time in a particular setting observing the daily activities, interactions, and behaviors of specific people, this study and research process was compressed into a more manageable eight-week time span.

Case Study

A case study is a small scale, holistic, empirical inquiry that investigates a single phenomenon or problem within a specific, bounded context (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2000; Yin, 2009). The focus of a case study can be a person, event, process, or problem. It is a bounded system although it may not always be easy to determine where the case ends and the context begins (Stake, 2000). Case studies rely on multiple sources of evidence and are used in many areas of research, particularly when the research topic is broadly defined and context is a major part of the study.

According to Merriam (2009) and Yin (2009), case study should be considered when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer "why" or "how" questions; (b) behaviors within the study cannot be manipulated; (c) the boundaries are unclear between the phenomena and the context; (d) the degree of focus is on the contemporary; and (e) the researcher is interested in the process. By examining each of these conditions separately, it is clear that this study demanded a descriptive case study approach to illustrate the in-depth description of the phenomena of distributed leadership and role ambiguity, as well as its complexities within the context of a school setting. Since effective distributed leadership is not easily found, my research revolved around one case study, delving deeply into the leadership practices of an individual whom I believe practices distributed leadership and shares decision-making responsibilities. A case study method allowed me to explore the processes of decision-making, problem-solving, and leadership as a process.

However, there are certain limitations in utilizing a case study approach. Results are limited to the specific phenomenon at one location rather than generalizing or

predicting future behaviors. Case studies can, according to Lincoln and Guba (2000), oversimplify a situation or be limited by the sensitivity or bias of the researcher. Further limitations include lack of representation and possible lack of rigor (Hamel, Dufour, & Fortin, 1993). Since this case study provides concrete principles that can easily be implemented by administrators and lends new insights into ambiguity that have not yet been captured in previous research, it makes studying these phenomena worthwhile despite these limitations.

Research Questions

The review of literature pertaining to distributed leadership and the role of ambiguity within the position of department chair in a secondary school setting led to several conclusions, which contributed significantly to the formulation of the research questions to be addressed by this study. Given the lack of research on addressing distributed leadership in practice and department chairs' role ambiguity within high schools, this study answers the overarching question: **What evidence exists that the principal uses shared or distributed leadership? What does it look like in this setting and how is it perceived? To what degree does the principal extol the principles of shared leadership?** Two additional research questions guided this study, as well:

1. How do department chairs approach the ambiguity that is inherent in the position?
2. How does the culture of the school influence or support the shared leadership model?

Participants and Site Selection

Site selection was purposeful, deliberate, and key to this study because examining a principal who effectively practices distributed leadership was my primary criteria.

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When deciding upon methodology and research design, I first listed qualities that I envisioned a principal possessing for distributing leadership effectively:

- utilizes department chairs' skills and strengths to their fullest capabilities;

- fosters strong relationships, positive interactions, and a supportive culture;

- encourages others to share in the decision-making process;

- participates in a collaborative decision-making process;

- encourages autonomy and creativity;

- facilitates and orchestrates activities and initiatives while supporting staff in following through with activities and initiatives;

- willing to tackle any challenge; and

- empowers department chairs to embrace new challenges.

Since the purpose of my research was to be reflective in my own professional practice, I wanted to interview a principal who comprehensively practices and extols distributed leadership through the implementation of a shared leadership model when problem- solving or making decisions. When I informally asked my principal colleagues in western Massachusetts for candidates, the name that first popped into my mind was supported by my colleagues, who witnessed this principal present at a conference. Online reviews at www.greatschools.org, which commented on the principal's strong leadership, as well as her collaborative and caring nature, further supported my participant of choice: "One of the greatest strengths is the sense of community that is nurtured by shared leadership." "The principal promotes academic excellence, is willing to be creative with students' schedules and has a great respect for the arts." "The school culture appreciates individuality, quality of instruction, and diversity of population." "The principal praises the work of faculty to everyone that will listen."

Located in a vibrant small, tourist town of western Massachusetts with a school population of 560, this regional school has a student population that is 88% Caucasian, 5% Hispanic and 3% African American. According to the DESE school profile, the student to teacher ratio is 12:1. Small Town High School was chosen as the case study site due to its strong leadership, academics, athletics, and the arts. It is also one of the few level 1 schools left in the state.

Small Town High School was purposely chosen because the principal implements a shared leadership model when making decisions and sharing responsibilities. Six groups comprise this shared leadership model: 12 department chairs that do not have evaluative authority; and a project leader in each of the following five categories: academic affairs, student management, data, communications and outreach, and student support. Every teacher is assigned to a specific group within these five categories.

In order to conduct research at the high school, the principal was contacted through email to request participation in the study. A follow-up meeting occurred shortly thereafter. The principal informed her faculty of my research and anticipated presence at future meetings. An informed consent document (see Appendix C and D) was given to the participants after they were informed of my upcoming visit. Prior to their interviews, participants received a reminder email to confirm the mutually agreed date, time, and location of the interview.

Participation in this study required minimal risks. Physical, emotional, legal, or employment related risks were not posed to participants at any time during the study. Prior to conducting this research study, I participated in an Internet-based "Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI)" in December 2010 and was recertified in

December 2015 (see Appendix F). Further, all participants were instructed of their confidential and anonymous responses. Fictitious names are used in place of the actual school and all of the participant names referred to in this case study.

Instrumentation

A hallmark and strength of case study research is the use of multiple data sources, a strategy which also enhances data credibility (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009). Interviews with the principal, assistant principal, department chairs, and project leaders; direct observations of informal and formal meetings; and document reviews were the primary sources of qualitative data collection used for this study. Additionally, informal conversations were held with the principal before and after faculty and department chair meetings. *Field notes,* a running commentary about what was happening in my research, were kept and allowed for thoughtful reflection on emerging understandings. These included reflections, concerns, my emotional responses, observations, observer comments, research leads, and concepts that needed further exploration. These field notes were helpful in guiding some decisions. For example, the field notes helped me to decide to follow a shared leadership group through the entire decision-making process instead of observing all 5 groups for shorter amounts of time.

Semi-structured, Open Ended Interviews

The primary means of data collection within this study were semi-structured, open-ended interviews with one specific principal, her department chairs, and her project leaders, which was the appropriate approach for a study examining the principles of distributed leadership. In-depth interviewing is a noted characteristic of qualitative

research, and allows the researcher to uncover meaning of participants' particular experiences by starting with specific observations and moving toward generalizations (Rossman & Rallis, 2012; Turner, 2010). Interviews, which are usually thematic or topical in structure, were conducted with members of a specific culture (the high school) in order to provide an in-depth perspective of that culture, which cannot be done through observation alone. An interview is a "conversational triad" between the researcher, the participants, and the social experience itself (Van Manen, 1990, p. 98). More structured than the informal conversational interview, this style of interview offers flexibility, adaptability, and a more personal approach (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Turner, 2010), allowing the beliefs and perceptions of the participants to surface.

An interview guide (see Appendix G) delineated from the research questions was used, and the questions were flexible enough to allow for emergent information with each person interviewed. The interview guide provided me the flexibility to explore and ask questions that illuminated distributed leadership and the decision-making process in practice. The research questions and interview guide were shared with my colleagues, professional learning community, and the advisors overseeing the research process in order to provide feedback in creating more open, objective research and interview questions that offered an opportunity for authentic inquiry into the participants' experiences and perceptions. Interviews were recorded with a digital recorder and transcribed verbatim. The information gained through these interviews assisted in answering all of the research questions.

Table 3.1. Research Question Alignment with Interviewee Questions

Overarching Question: What evidence exists that the principal uses distributed leadership? What does distributed leadership look like in this setting and how is it perceived? Questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 27, 28, 31

Question 1: How do department chairs approach the ambiguity that is inherent in the position? Questions 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31

Question 2: How does the culture of the school influence or support the shared leadership model? Questions 5, 6, 9, 13, 14, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31

Once I realized that the contract and union labor mentality purposely avoided ambiguity, I should have switched my focus to examining the ambiguity within the relationships and decision-making process. As a novice researcher, I found that my interview questions were not analytical and therefore, could not gleam thorough responses in regards to ambiguity.

Direct, Nonparticipatory Observations

Direct, non-participatory observations were utilized in order to prevent bias and lessen faculty curiosity and anxiety. Fundamental in qualitative research, observations helped me to understand context and patterns of behavior while systematically noting events, interactions, and actual leadership practice (Rossman & Rallis, 2012; Sherer, 2006; Yin, 2011). I observed the principal in her daily activities in order to get a deeper understanding of her leadership style and how she interacted with department chairs. I observed ten meetings in a variety of settings (faculty, department chair, and shared leadership groups). Observations of department chair meetings occurred during the school day while faculty and shared leadership meetings occurred after school.

According to Sherer (2006), meetings are the most tangible way that leadership practice and interactions can be observed. Department Chairs and faculty members were assured of confidentiality while I was audiotaping. All observations and interpretations were documented in my field notes within the reflective journal. The information gained through these observations assisted me in answering all of the research questions, in particular the overarching and second research questions.

Surveys

A scale survey was administered to participants, which provided a way to measure the attitudes of individuals by responding to value judgment statements (Göb, McCollin, & Ramalhoto, 2007). Department chairs were given a survey (see Appendix H) with 17 statements, which allowed me to gauge their level of self-efficacy and organizational commitment as a collective unit. The first ten statements were developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem in 1979 and are a part of the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE). This scale assesses an individual's sense of perceived self-efficacy, which sheds light on how one copes with daily hassles, coping skills, and adaptation skills. The construct of perceived self-efficacy reflects an optimistic self-belief that one can perform difficult tasks or handle adversity in various domains (Schwarzer & Jerusalem 1995). Goal setting, persistence, adaptation, and recovery from setbacks are facilitated through this construct.

The last seven statements were taken from the Validation of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ), developed by Porter & Smith (1970). The OCQ validates three variables: job satisfaction, performance, and support of organizational

values. Based on the results, I was able to gauge the level of emotional ties and positive work experiences of the department chairs. Explicit written permission was unnecessary to utilize the GSE or OCQ, given that appropriate recognition of the sources is made. The information gained through the surveys assisted me in answering the first and second research questions.

Analysis of Site Documents

The analysis of site documents that shape leadership practice supplemented my observations and interviews and corroborated information revealed from participants (Yin, 2009). Site documents were beneficial to the research study due to the time span the documents covered, the event details described, and the opportunity to review the documents repeatedly (Yin, 2011). Adding to the depth of information already gathered through interviews and various observations, I collected and analyzed the following documents: department chair job description, shared leadership models, meeting minutes, and PowerPoint presentations from the various shared leadership groups. These models provided insight into the expectations of the various leadership positions. The meeting minutes and PowerPoint presentation slides from various shared leadership groups served as substitutes in recording pertinent actions of the various groups.

Documents varied in detail but provided a vital component in gaining a comprehensive understanding of distributed leadership and the assignment of specific tasks. By utilizing this unobtrusive method, I gained further insights into distributed leadership practices, decision-making processes, and division of labor within Small Town High School. The information gained through the surveys assisted me in answering all of the research questions, in particular, the overarching and second research questions.

Table 3.2. Methods of Investigation for Research Questions

Method	What evidence exists that the principal uses DL? What does it look like in this setting and how is it perceived? To what degree does the principal extol the principles of shared leadership?	How do department chairs approach the ambiguity that is inherent in the position?	How does the culture of the school influence or support the shared leadership model?
Researcher field notes	X	X	X
Interviews with principal, dept. chairs and project leaders	X	X	X
Direct observations of principal	X	X	X
Direct observations of meetings	X		X
Scale survey		X	X
Department chair job description	X	X	
Shared leadership model/ PowerPoints	X		

Data Collection Process

According to Rossman and Rallis (2012), data collection is a deliberate,

systematic process that details the data and processes of research activities so that others

may understand how the study is performed and can judge its adequacy, strengths, and

ethics. Data collection captures diverse experiences, encounters, and relationships in a

natural setting (Brewer, 2000; Parthasarathy, 2008).

Data collection included audio taped personal interviews with the principal,

assistant principal, a veteran teacher, department chairs, and project leaders; a collection

of field notes and surveys; as well as the analytic memos written for the document

review. The collection and analysis of data in this study occurred concurrently over an

eight-week time span in the Spring of 2015. I utilized the following process as a guideline

for my data collection, which was created by Amadio Giorgi (as cited in Moustakas,

1994):

- An informative letter detailing the study was sent to the prospective principal, requesting her participation four weeks before the study;

- Once contacted to determine a meeting date and location, an informed consent form was distributed one week prior to the study; artifacts pertaining to roles and responsibilities were requested;

- A confirmation e-mail was sent confirming date, time, and location of interview;

- Observations of the principal in her daily activities took place in various settings during the eight week time span;

- To further understand themes and patterns of distributed leadership, interviews with the principal, assistant principal, department chairs, and project leaders were conducted. All were interviewed about their experiences and perceptions, using semi-structured open-ended questions (see Appendix G). All interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder, and after signing a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix J), the information was transcribed by a transcriptionist verbatim. A thank you email was sent within two weeks each interview;

- The principal provided me with meeting dates of faculty meetings, department chair meetings, and shared leadership group meetings, which I attended. The only interactions that I had with faculty were salutations and brief conversations after meetings; and

- The examination of site documents supplemented my observations and interviews.

I constructed reflective and descriptive field notes, which described what I heard and saw during observations, conversations, and interviews. These reflections were written in my car immediately following any interactions. I reflected upon the interview process, recorded insights and impressions about participants' beliefs, interactions, and experiences, as well as made notes of any follow- up questions that may be necessary. I made assumptions about all of the participants, observed social norms that influenced distributed leadership (see Appendix B), as well as provided reactions to the participants' stories. These field notes helped me to remain cognizant of how the interview data could potentially influence this study.

Transcribing interviews involves judgment and interpretation. As Marshall and Rossman note (2011, p. 164), "We do not speak in paragraphs, nor do we signal punctuation as we speak." Once the transcripts were transcribed, I read, reviewed, and edited each transcript for accuracy. During the subsequent readings of each transcript, I completed *analytic memos* in the margins of the transcripts, noting themes and patterns as they emerged. The purpose of the analytic memo, according to Maxwell (2005) and Saldana (2009), is to reflect upon the entire inquiry process, capturing analytic thinking about the data, citing impressions of participants and their perceptions, and stimulating analytic thoughts. Notes were made about initial connections, similar opinions about various topics, as well as differences in perceptions and beliefs.
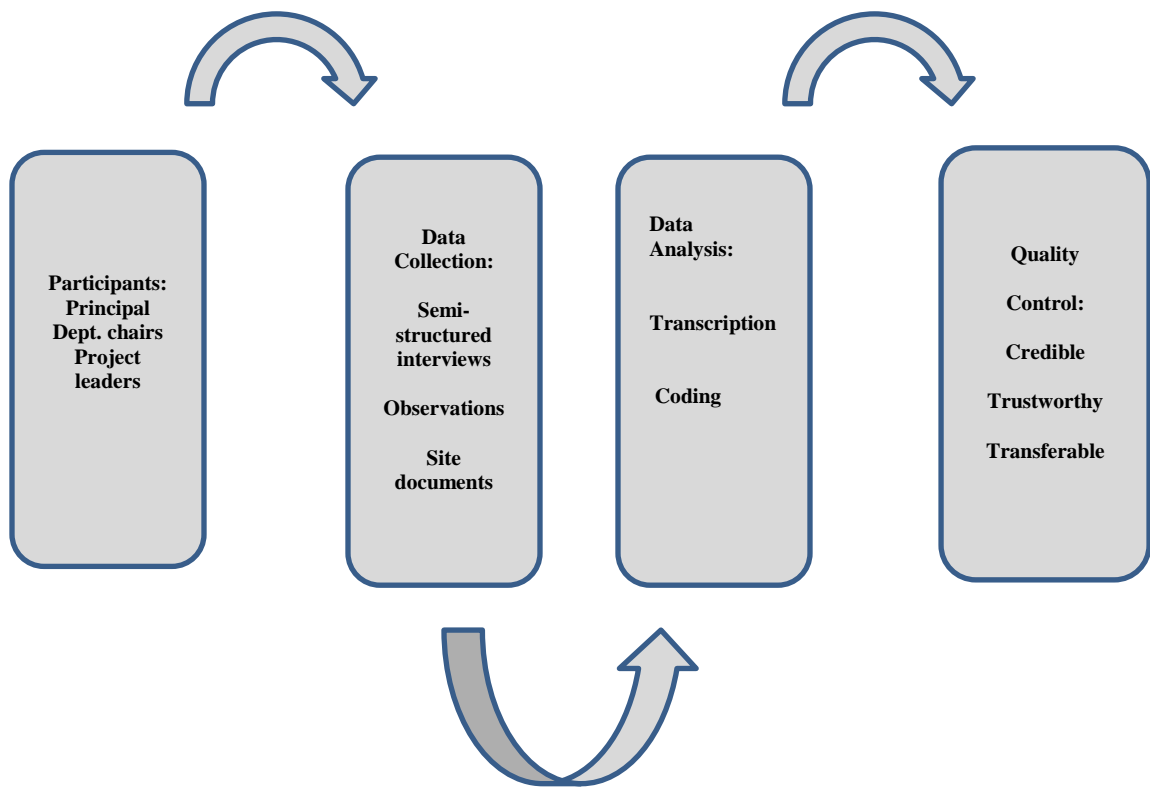
Figure 3.1. Process of Data Collection and Analysis

Data Analysis Process

Perceptions play a critical role in data analysis, and a carefully constructed analysis was central to the development of my research study. Since there is not a prescribed formula for qualitative analysis, "qualitative analysis transforms data into findings" (Patton, 2002, p. 432). Bogdan and Biklen (1988) define qualitative data analysis as "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (p. 145). As in other qualitative studies, data collection occurred concurrently with data analysis, which allowed for revelations to refine subsequent questions.

The participants' perceptions, my field notes, and analytic memos allowed for analysis and pattern matching of information to conceptual or reoccurring themes, ensuring credibility and transferability of the information collection and analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Hatch, 2002). Data were analyzed according to interactions and situations in which distributed leadership was practiced, ambiguity stifled or leveraged, and school culture influenced. Since the best way to prepare for analysis is to have a "general analytic strategy" (Yin, 2009, p. 135), my data analysis strategy aligned with Creswell's (2009) three step process for data analysis: (1) data organization; (2) data review including marginal notes and analytic memos; and (3) generating categories and themes through detailed analysis and coding.

As noted earlier, interviews and meetings were audiotaped with permission of the participants (See Appendix C and D) and then transcribed. This allowed me to focus on the interviewee, paying particular attention to nuances, body language, and tone of voice. The interview transcription was read several times, the first time to get a general sense of the entire description, subsequent times to discover more precise elements of meaning. Insights were "synthesized into a consistent description of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 14). Raw data were placed into meaningful categories, which were later interpreted and coded.

In order to thoroughly analyze an ethnographic study, a sound analytical coding system was implemented, which is a pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain the data (Emerson, 2001). Coding examined consistent phrases or ideas that were common among the participants, and allowed me to search for patterns, frequencies, and relationships. Also known as *conceptual ordering*, this phase

can be the most challenging because categories are uncovered that are consistent yet

distinct from one another (e.g., perceptions towards power and the Warrior Way).

Although descriptive codes can be developed before or during data collection or analysis,

I coded during the preliminary stages of analysis, which consisted of recording marginal

notes and highlighting certain phrases while reviewing transcripts. Code development

also involved listing major topics, assigning codes to topics, assigning categories to

codes, and performing analysis of the significant categories and codes, as they related to

my research questions (Creswell, 2009). Codes were condensed into recurring themes

that linked participants' experiences, beliefs, and leadership styles. I tried to avoid the

three potential pitfalls identified by Schwandt (2007): (1) the tendency to code at the

descriptive level rather than to code for the purposes of explaining or developing an

understanding of the phenomena; (2) the tendency to think of coding as a mechanical,

straight-forward process, thereby ignoring theoretical concepts and understandings that

are involved; and (3) the tendency to regard codes as 'fixed' or unchangeable labels,

thereby ignoring their organic, dynamic character (pp. 32-33).

I summarized patterns and themes after each transcription. I created summaries

from each interview and organized the findings based on themes. I noted common themes

across all interviews, as well as those that had not been raised. After creating categories, I

coded the transcripts to see what themes emerged, such as empowerment, leadership

style, history of shared leadership, and culture. Once the categories were determined, I

coded each transcript and organized data into subcategories. I used separate Microsoft

Word files for each category in order to place the selected portions of each transcript into

the subcategory file. Once completed, I summarized the findings that emerged from each subcategory.

I analyzed my observations by discerning patterns of behavior, finding the underlying meaning in the things I observed. I also collected and analyzed official documents, such as job descriptions and meeting minutes to assist me in clarifying leadership expectations, roles, and responsibilities. Document analysis provided insights into official expectations, as well as internal rules and regulations.

Limitations

The sample for this study was limited to a secondary Principal in one specific Western Massachusetts school and, therefore, generalization beyond that scope is limited. The study is not generalizable to all elementary and secondary schools in all regions of the United States; it is limited by being conducted in one region of one state and at the secondary (9-12) level.

Since the research is more intimate and personal, somewhat subjective findings were expected to be yielded. Although full disclosure to the purpose of my research study was provided and the participants' anonymity and confidentiality guaranteed, some of the principal's and other participants' responses may be biases due to my position as a colleague.

Since researchers should attempt to get as close as possible to the participants being studied (Creswell, 2007), I chose a participant with whom I am familiar, which was the biggest limitation of all. There were times in my research when the principal's statements and my observations did not match. For example, the principal felt that teachers "hit it out of the park" with DDMs. However, teachers did not know what

DDMs were or how they were supposed to help guide their practice. Since I was friendly with the principal, I believe at times she made statements that she believed that I wanted to hear in order to support my research and theoretical constructs (e.g., manipulating results to leverage ambiguity could not be supported). While it is imperative to be honest with participants, results may have differed if I did not stress the benefits of ambiguity or how organizational commitment and self-efficacy can influence perceptions towards ambiguity.

The research is limited by the time frame of data collection and is representative of perceptions from Spring 2015. It draws conclusions from a point in time rather than a longitudinal data set. While most argue that qualitative research is inherently subjective, it is inevitable that assumptions, areas of interest, and emotions can enter the process (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Also, as the personal biographer of this research, I speak from a particular class, gender, race, and cultural community perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 18), which may bias my findings. My experience as a current principal and former department chair may have biased my findings, as well.

Researcher inexperience could have led to some form of bias or mistake, although all possible precautions were taken throughout the study in order to prevent such limitations from having an impact on the results. Although I exhausted the literature, it is possible that one or more of the research questions has been previously answered without my knowledge.

Site specific limitations were found, as well. Since administrators use principles of distributed leadership that best suite them, their school, and situation, the principal's personal preferences were the focus. Perhaps the biggest limitation of all was the history

of Small Town High School. Since budget cuts in 2009 changed the scope and expectations of the department chairs, their job description and union expectations are quite clear- department chairs only perform tasks that are identified in their job description. All ambiguous tasks or responsibilities are dropped in administrators' laps. A significant portion of my research pertained to the perceptions and acceptance of ambiguity, which was left only partially explored at this site.

Verification of Findings

One of the difficulties of conducting qualitative research is conducting trustworthy analysis that leads to sound conclusions (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). Numerous frameworks have been developed to assess the trustworthiness and reliability of qualitative data, which is concerned with the replication of results. Since this research was conducted at one specific site focused on one principal, it may not be possible to attain the reliability that is expected in experimental research. However, Merriam (2009) suggests that reliability is more of an internal measure. "The question then is not whether findings will be found again but whether the results are consistent with the data collected" (p. 206).

According to Tufford and Newman (2010), *bracketing* can help expose account for bias and preconceptions, as well as add to the richness and depth of the researcher's reflections during all stages of the research study. Bracketing is employed at several stages of the research design. As noted earlier, interviews and meetings were audiotaped, with permission of the participants (See Appendix C and D), and then transcribed. This allowed me to focus on the interviewee, paying particular attention to nuances, body language and tone of voice. The interview transcription was read several times, the first

time to get a general sense of the entire description, subsequent times to discover more precise elements of meaning. Insights were "synthesized into a consistent description of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 14). The interviews were analyzed once I bracketed out my own experiences, allowing me to look at data with fresh eyes by setting common understandings and judgments aside (Moustakas, 1994). This was a difficult process for me, separating my experiences and perceptions with what I was witnessing. Just as jury members must analyze only the evidence presented in a trial and not connect other sources of information to the presented evidence, researchers must suspend any judgments about the phenomena, as well (Creswell, 2007). Raw data was placed into meaningful categories, which were interpreted and coded.

The findings of this study were verified not validated, which is in the spirit of qualitative inquiry. Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that verification consists of procedures including triangulation, member checking, rich and thick descriptions, peer review and clarification of research bias.

Triangulation increases the trustworthiness and validity of research findings and aides in the elimination of bias because facts are verified through multiple sources of data, and plausible rival explanations are examined. "The rationale for this strategy is that the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another; and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each while overcoming their unique deficiencies" (Denzin, 1978, p. 302) Data from various sources were used to corroborate or elaborate research questions, strengthening the study's usefulness for other settings. Triangulation of information was gathered through interviews and follow up discussions, member checking of interview responses with participants, direct observations of interactions and

meetings, continued reflection of analytic memos, and content analysis of the document review in order to identify critical themes which address the research questions.

Member Checks are considered the single most important provision for strengthening credibility in qualitative research because participants confirm and corroborate findings, decreasing the incidence of incorrect data, strengthening the credibility and rigor of the project (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Member checking occurred during the interview by my restatement or summarization of responses to acknowledge accurate interpretation and during a final visit to attain clarification to any questions.

Case studies provide rich description and insightful information, which other design methods do not produce (Yin, 2011). *Rich and thick descriptions* are a way of achieving external validity and refer to the detailed account of field experiences in which the researcher interprets the behavior within a specific context. Emotions, voices, actions, and interpretations are expressed in rich and thick descriptions, an ethnographic technique that allows a researcher to create an "observation in context" (Zemliansky, 2008).

Peer review, by sharing initial and ongoing findings with others interested in the topic, decreases the likelihood of researcher bias and inaccurate conclusions. The dissertation chairperson, committee members, and graduate students within my cohort reviewed the study, procedures, and findings for accuracy. The role of the committee, especially the chairperson, by its very nature fulfills Merriam's suggestion to involve others in all phases of the research "from conceptualizing the study to writing up the findings" (1998, p. 205). Regular peer debriefings, in addition to sharing reflections and

emerging in While most argue that qualitative research is inherently subjective, it is inevitable that assumptions, areas of interest and emotions can enter the process (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research takes place in real life situations and settings, and according to Rossman and Rallis (2012), strives to maintain quality standards while recognizing that the researcher's lens, beliefs, perceptions, gender, age, and politics affect the research study. Since researchers are obliged to respect the rights, needs, and values of all participants (Creswell, 2009), the trustworthiness of a qualitative study is judged by whether the researcher conforms to standards for acceptable and competent practices, and whether the standards for ethical conduct are met (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). *Descriptive validity*, the factual accuracy of accounts from interviewees; *interpretive validity*, the ability of the researcher to understand the meaning of events that participants experience; and *theoretical validity*, the theoretical constructs brought to the study by the researcher, are three ways to preserve the trustworthiness of a qualitative design (Creswell, 2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Due to the constant self-monitoring of the researcher, internal validity is a major strength of qualitative research (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

Risks to participants were considered minimal and did not exceed risks associated with everyday life. In order to obtain informed consent and protect subjects from harm, I submitted a description of the study, a plan for the distribution of findings, and other pertinent information, such as informed consent letters, to the University of Massachusetts Institutional Review Board. Upon approval from the IRB, I contacted the principal for participation in the study. Special attention was given to the types of

questions posed during interviews to avoid offensive or stereotypical statements, questions or comments based on age, gender, race, or other protected or unprotected groups.

I am devoted to conducting ethical research and presenting findings that neither suppress nor falsify any information. According to Fowler (2002), it is my responsibility to ensure appropriate analysis and dissemination of data. As such, participants were presented with the process of this study in writing through an introductory letter and verbally reiterated throughout the study. The potential benefits of this study were discussed with the participants prior to their agreement to participate. Identities of all school personnel were protected at all times through the study. Lastly, a final draft of this manuscript was emailed to the principal.

<u>Summary</u>

In summary, this chapter reviewed the purpose of the study and explained the methods used to conduct this study. The underlying reasons for conducting an ethnographic qualitative case study were addressed in the researched design section of this chapter. Although single case studies are not generalizable, they still offer a unique insight into phenomena that have not been previously explored by researchers. Since this case study lends new insights into principles of practice and how school culture influences distributed leadership, it made studying the phenomenon of distributed leadership worthwhile.

Through this research I hoped to shed light on my own professional practice and use of distributed leadership while being cognizant of how ambiguity and school culture can influence a shared leadership model. Situations were observed and opportunities

analyzed that demonstrated the principal's reliance on shared leadership and her comfort with ambiguity. This research could have important implications for leadership practice and may provide new insights into various principles of distributed leadership, ambiguity, and a school culture's capacity to influence the success or demise of any shared leadership model. By understanding the theoretical constructs explained in Chapter 2, the implementation of distributed leadership is simplified and ambiguity accepted. Chapter 4 will offer a detailed description and discussion of the qualitative findings for this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS, KEY FINDINGS, AND IMPLICATIONS

<u>Purpose of the Study</u>

This study used an ethnographic qualitative approach, relying on a descriptive single case study strategy of inquiry, to examine the interactions between a principal and her department chairs. Since I maximize the leadership capacity of my department chairs by embracing collaborative problem-solving, shared decision-making, ambiguity and outside of the box thinking, I have often wondered how other principals fulfill all of their responsibilities and manage ambiguity. Since distributed leadership and ambiguity have served me well, I wanted to explore these concepts in a different setting to determine how responsibilities are shared, problems solved, and decision made. How relationships, interactions, and school culture influence the shared leadership model were also investigated.

Data were collected through individual and small group interviews with semi-structured, open-ended questions; direct, nonparticipatory observations; surveys; and analysis of site documents. This chapter will state the results, key findings, and implications of how shared leadership was utilized in this secondary school, how ambiguity was perceived and managed by participants, and how the school culture influenced the shared leadership model.

Unraveling the details of the principal's success of distributed leadership could be beneficial for school administrators not only to build the leadership capacity of department chairs but also to strengthen relationships, increase productivity, and decision-making among formal and informal leaders. It may open dialogue and change

perceptions that acknowledge and accept role ambiguity as a positive catalyst towards

creativity and flexibility among department chairs, as well.

History of the Shared Leadership Model at Small Town High School

The history of the shared leadership model at Small Town High School is

influenced by the administrative history of the school. The principal led the school for

eight years before vacating the position to fill an administrative vacancy in another

district in 2007. The newly hired principal did not have a good working relationship with

teachers. Therefore, teachers were thrilled when the former principal returned in 2009,

after a two year absence. Unfortunately, her decision to remove department supervisors

and implement a shared leadership model came within months of her return. The betrayal

of her leaving "for greener pastures" along with the bitterness of this decision, has made

distributed leadership difficult to implement at times due to strained relationships.

Prior to 2009, the high school relied heavily upon department supervisors to be

the instructional leaders of the school. A serious budget deficit in 2009 led to the

principal's suggestion to the superintendent and school committee to eliminate the

position of department supervisors, saving the district upward of $45,000. The $3,000

stipend and a period off for each department supervisor were highly valued by faculty yet

costly to the district. This decision was not discussed with faculty, merely implemented.

This negatively influenced the school culture and teacher morale, and indirectly, how

ambiguity is currently managed. In fact, bad feelings exist numerous years after the

decision was made. The principal still feels guilty for eliminating the positions. "Of all of

the decisions that I have ever made in my career, this is in the top five of the least liked

decisions. …The school committee didn't really see why we needed them anyway, since

we're just a small, rural high school." The elimination of the position left the administration overwhelmed and faculty disgruntled.

A year without middle management left a gaping hole in the structure, which was quickly replaced with a shared leadership (SL) model with full faculty involvement being a critical aspect. Proposed by the principal, this model was comprised of project leaders (PL) in data, academic affairs, communication, student management, and student support with the rest of the faculty comprising group membership. While some volunteered for specific groups, others were placed by the principal. The first year was filled with complaints, negativity, and a yearning to reinstate department supervisors. While the addition of a shared leadership model was an improvement and involved all teachers to varying degrees, tasks and instructional leadership were neglected.

At this point, the school committee reluctantly agreed to a new position, department chairs (DCs), twelve teachers with full workloads and no supervisory capabilities to act as liaisons between departments and administration. While the principal reports that the written job descriptions for both positions were edited from the old department supervisor job description with the assistance of the union, teachers felt they did not participate in this development. Although the job descriptions list several tasks and responsibilities, ambiguity within those responsibilities exists, especially in regards to instructional leadership. The switch to DCs was not fully supported by faculty, and the newly designed DCs refused to fulfill any tasks that were not clearly identified in the job description, in particular, instruction. While DCs feel great loyalty toward the principal, feelings of betrayal and bitterness still linger today. Adding to these negative

feelings, the "labor mentality" of the union has expressly forbade its teachers from doing more than the agreed upon tasks.

The SL model continuously evolves trying to meet the needs of all participants. Every year, the SL model is adapted and refigured to address the previous year's concerns and suggestions. During the first three years, teachers felt the SL model was reactive, not entirely successful, effective, nor collaborative.

> We compiled data and then thought how it could be useful. It was after the fact, which didn't work for us. We were just compiling data that might show up in one blurb on one spreadsheet…We have different ideas for what this group can be. We feel we are very underutilized and then other times we get slammed at once. We're not solving problems or helping to move the school forward in any way. (Evan, personal interview, May 28, 2015)

A few meetings in the beginning of every year were spent identifying goals and examining the SL model. This was a time consuming process because goals were vague and ambiguous, and people's comfort level with the SL model varied. "Maureen says this is what we have to work on instead of taking ownership of the task," said one PL. Maureen listened to the teachers that voiced their concerns, and in 2015 the SL model was revised in order for groups to focus on specific issues that were important to the school community. The change from being group-based to topic-based was warmly embraced by all faculty because they feel they work more constructively, better utilize their skills, and participate more fully in the decision making process, as opposed to Maureen telling groups what to discuss. "I think people are excited about focusing on specific initiatives and surprised that we finally have a voice," according Kim (personal interview, May 20, 2015).

> It's interesting in this model. I love the switch! It's genius! Each group works on a problem. Before it was more global…student data team,

student management. They were waiting for something to come to them instead of them producing the problem and solution. (Julie, personal interview, May 18, 2015)

It's been a huge change! We are now proactive. It's changed the demeanor of the team, how we go about things…we are more excited. There's more drive to get things done. We are a little more creative in our thinking, as well. We recognized that before, the information that we provided was simply going to be shuffled somewhere but now things are coming up in front of the full faculty, and we are able to discuss it. (Evan, personal interview, May 28, 2015)

Summarization of Key Participants

The findings in this chapter present the voices of seventeen participants that I interviewed (principal, assistant principal, five PLs, nine DCs and one veteran teacher). Three DCs chose not to participate in the group interviews or survey.

The Principal

Maureen's earliest experiences with shared leadership began when she was an English teacher in Vermont where a faculty council was formed as a means to minimize an ineffective principal's power and increase shared decision making among the faculty. Organic in nature, the faculty council became a part of the organizational structure. Maureen's involvement in this council influenced her leadership style, relationships, way of thinking, and sharing leadership: "I really believe in this model- the 'collegial discussions about important topics' model."

Maureen characterizes herself as an accessible, innovative, supportive, and protective leader and therefore "expects that the ideas and energy will come from the students and the teachers." Maureen jokingly informed me that much of her leadership practice has been shaped by the TV show "West Wing", such as gathering all opinions

before making a decision, giving teachers the autonomy and opportunity to experiment, holding people accountable, and protecting staff.

"She's very approachable, intelligent and very good at balancing the needs of students, the school, and the faculty," according to one PL (Evan, personal interview, May 28, 2015). Her leadership style has been characterized as "not too heavy handed nor too light handed." Teachers acknowledge that Maureen gives them flexibility to try new things but also offers suggestions when appropriate. According to Evan (personal interview on May 28, 2015),

> She knows that for things to work, you have to be willing to look at things from various perspectives. She's good at verbalizing those things in a way that she doesn't take the wind out of your sails but may add to your challenges.

Project Leaders

Project leaders (PLs) are proud of their role and seek leadership activities and additional challenges: "… and then there are those of us like me, who are seeking opportunities beyond the classroom, beyond the academic piece. I think that says something about people who want leadership, and want those opportunities." "I'd like to take on something. Please put me where you think I could do the most good." People are willing to accept roles because they provide important psychological benefits, such as increased self-esteem, status, and ego gratification (William & Alliger, 1994). PLs view themselves as an advisory board separate from department chairs with little power, primarily because they believe this authority has not been granted in their job description. PLs believe that the school committee deliberately reinstated this shared leadership model with less power.

I don't feel like I have authority. I have collegial leadership and status and
        respect but not authority- that's not my role….People come late to
meetings and I don't feel I have any authority so I don't do anything about
it… I don't have the right to
call people out on their professional behavior in my role as project leader"
(Kim, personal interview, May 20, 2015).

Department Chairs

Twelve department chairs (DCs) comprise the principal's advisory board. All individuals applied for the position because they wanted a leadership role and more responsibilities outside of the classroom. According to Maureen, "They want to be leaders, are viewed as leaders, (want to) be involved, and are invested in the school by and large." They view themselves as active players in the school, influencing the school and its initiatives. They feel that Maureen listens to them and that they have a voice in the school. However, bad feelings still exist from the 2009 changes due to their decreased instructional leadership and evaluative responsibilities.

There is a lack of power and authority perceived by the school community to be afforded to DCs. In fact, one DC believes she is viewed as a facilitator and communicator, not a leader. While they believe they have referent power within their departments, DCs do not feel they have the power to resolve conflicts, tell others what to do, or even offer instructional strategies to department members. However, the majority of DCs view themselves as having more authority and influence than PLs regardless of their lack of instructional leadership. Biweekly meetings with the principal keep them informed and provide them an opportunity to be heard by the principal.
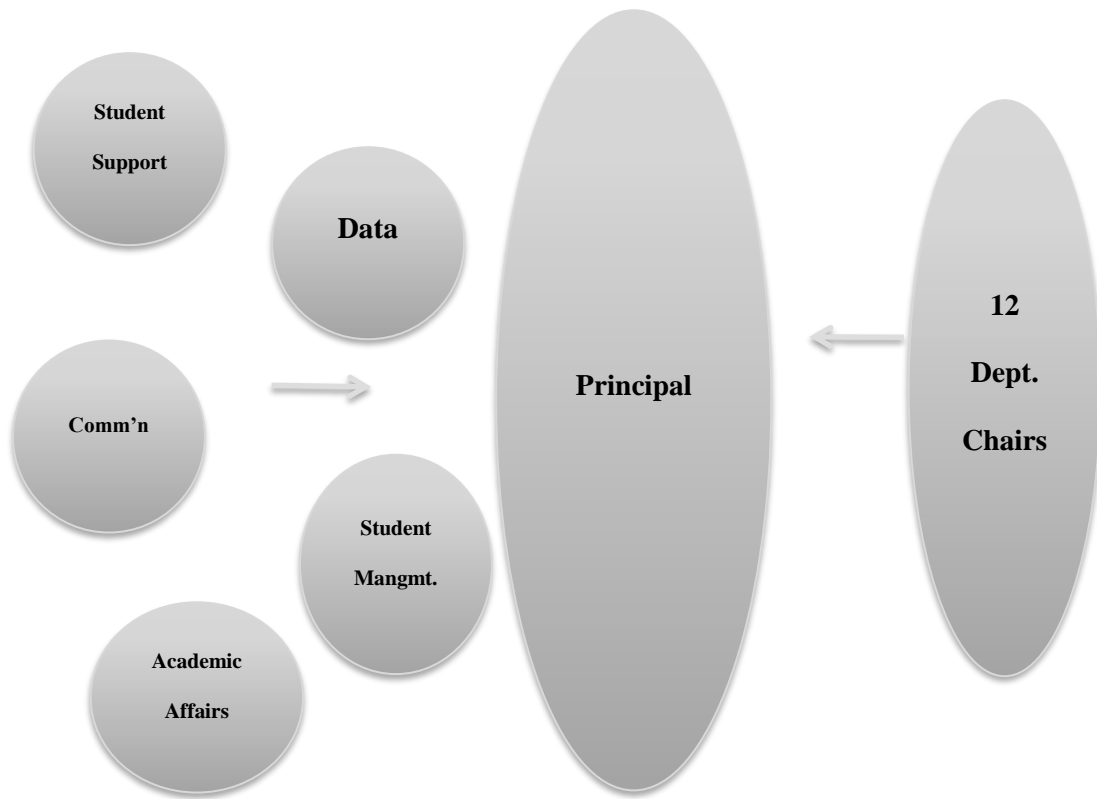
Figure 4.1. Shared Leadership Model Implemented at Small Town High School

<u>Key Findings and Discussion from Research Questions</u>

The following section answers the research questions this study examined, which are supported by theories explained in Chapter 2. These key findings are significant in the application of distributed leadership regardless of the situation or degree of implementation.

Discussion of Findings Related to Overarching Question: What evidence exists that the principal uses distributed leadership? What does distributed leadership look like in this setting and how is it perceived?

This question was designed to affirm the principal's use of distributed leadership and understand the perceptions held by the principal, DCs, and PLs. This question also examined participants' perspectives regarding the degree to which the principles of shared leadership were implemented. From the information collected from these data, 23 codes were formed into five central categories (see Appendix K, L, and M for Codes): principal as participative leader; collaborative problem-solving and the decision-making process; autonomy; importance of school culture and collaboration; and authority, influence and power.

Recognizing that her position is not a "one-person business" (Hulpia et al., 2011), Maureen implements DL in order to strengthen the structure and operations, meet school objectives, as well as improve school culture (Chance & Lingren, 1988; Elmore, 2000; Harris, 2005; Spillane, 2008).

Finding 1: The principal distributes leadership in a variety of ways, including implementing a shared leadership model, facilitating email conversations, encouraging professional development department days, encouraging faculty and student ownership, and expecting active faculty participation.

1. A shared leadership model is implemented with shared leadership groups: Committees are a common form of shared leadership and institutionalized practice (Gronn, 2002). Five groups comprise the SL model, which was implemented as a means to collaboratively problem-solve and share leadership responsibilities. All faculty were

assigned to a group, some volunteering for specific placements and others placed by

Maureen. In previous years, groups met 4-5 times annually and either dealt with specific

issues relevant to their groups as they arose, such as "the golden rule" in the student

management team or revising the Program of Studies in the academic affairs team. At

times all groups simply focused on one issue:

> Shared leadership groups were primarily set up for us to break up into groups and answer this question or solve this problem, so we're all tackling the same problem but through different lenses….our group title had nothing to do with the task…(we focused on) random problems or general things that were going on in the school…as a faculty trying to problem-solve. (Timothy, personal interview, June 10, 2015)

Since some faculty were not interested in the chosen topics and voiced their

concern, Maureen restructured the SL model. Good leaders know that any given situation

requires flexibility and willingness to change (Fullan, 2007; Snowden & Gorton, 2002).

As Timothy disclosed, "OK, if that's what you want, then that's what you're going to

get." Spring of 2015 was the first time that people were assigned by topic and not group,

which energized the teachers. "Teachers are really excited that they got to pick topics, not

necessarily the groups and that they are actually making recommendations for the faculty.

They are coming up with solutions to real problems", stated the assistant principal. "They

are going to have to talk to each other, share suggestions and recommendations, and they

are going to have to take ownership" (Stephen, personal interview, May 20, 2015).

When buy-in and consensus from a group are necessary, team members must be

included in the decision-making process (Hersey et al., 2012). Each teacher chose or was

placed in one of the following four shared leadership groups regardless of which shared

leadership group they were in previously: graduation requirements/ Advanced Placement

(student management team); independent projects and pull-outs (academic affairs); end of year mini-courses (student support); self-study (Maureen).

    2. *Email conversations are facilitated with the entire faculty*: A topic that has been on people's mind will be the topic for the week, such as "pull-outs" or mini-courses. All faculty are encouraged to participate either by posting comments or meeting with other teachers during their prep periods on Tuesdays or Wednesdays. Some negativity occurs before people finally see the issue from varying perspectives:

> We set up faculty conversations (focusing on independent projects) for two days and we do this whole thing…and the first 4 periods of conversations are negative- this should go, this doesn't work…and then somewhere later on it shifts to, "You know, this could work. This could be good." (Maureen, personal interview, April 22, 2015)

This is a perfect example of the *Garbage Can* Theory, which will be discussed later in Chapter 5. Viewpoints and input are recorded in Google docs. The principal reflects upon opinions, and findings are usually incorporated into faculty meeting agendas, which inform next steps. When faculty feel heard, respected, and "part of the solution" in the school's decision-making process, job satisfaction and commitment to the school are likely to increase, which in turn translates to positive student behaviors and learning outcomes (Harris, 2013).

    3. *Professional development days are encouraged within individual departments:* Coverage is provided and department chairs design their own agendas, exploring burning issues within their departments, such as not offering Advanced Placement science courses in the future, how to best utilize lab time, or establish common assessments. Maureen is supportive and provides plenty of autonomy:

> The math department has this little spark of 'let's do something crazy'. They decided they wanted to meet at Panera for the day. These are

professionals, and I want them to do good work…They took it seriously. They sat at Panera all day, drinking coffee. They had a great day and accomplished a great deal. (Maureen, personal interview, April 22, 2015)

4. Faculty and student ownership is encouraged: Maureen encourages the entire school community to bring forth ideas and action plans while providing support, resources, and autonomy because leadership is the collective responsibility of all school community members (Lambert, 2002). The refocused SL groups increased faculty ownership: "Teachers have more buy-in now that they have come up with the suggestions, and are more apt to follow through" (Timothy, personal interview, June 10, 2015).

Maureen is able to guide faculty to be creative and explore new ways of doing things (Bass, 1990). Students were unhappy with the cafeteria food that was being served and felt that the cafeteria workers were not listening to their concerns. Students proposed a Farm to School stand with students designing, implementing, and managing a school store that sells healthy snacks throughout the day. Other students took this one step further and initiated Project Sprout, Small Town High School's own vegetable garden, to donate fresh vegetables to the school cafeteria for incorporation into school salads. While Maureen approved of this initiative, it was completely student driven and student executed. Initiatives such as Project Sprout or a Farm to Stand enhance morale and a collective sense of identity to the school (Bass, 2000; Harris, 2005). Also, when these organizational outcomes are successful, the culture of the school is further strengthened (Bass, 1990; Kirby et al., 1992).

5. Faculty are expected to be active participants in faculty meetings: Maureen develops leadership capacity by empowering others. She believes that one of her most

successful attributes is her willingness to listen to people and see them as individuals

(Bass, 1990), making every scenario "win-win" if possible. She expects ideas and energy

to flow from her students and teachers, and puts the ownership of those ideas back on her

students and teachers. According to Maureen, "The top down approach doesn't work.

Some of our initiatives have failed miserably because there hasn't been buy-in and it

wasn't their idea to begin with."

The SL model was implemented in every faculty meeting that I observed.

Maureen stood back and allowed leadership to emerge while providing the necessary

supports to make change (Harris, 2008). Faculty discussed the major topics within the

shared leadership groups, made recommendations, and voted on final proposals in a

collaborative manner. By working together in small groups, individuals were able to

share their idea, beliefs, and past experiences, and learn from one another. Through this

collaboration, individual perspectives and values morphed, allowing teachers to construct

their own meaning (Lambert, 1998; Piaget, 1975), influencing decisions (i.e., what

graduation requirements are truly relevant; what skills do students need to succeed in

college or careers).

Principles of Distributed Leadership

It is difficult to pinpoint successful distributed leadership because the term is so

ambiguous. However, after reviewing all of the relevant research pertaining to the

phenomenon of distributed leadership, I developed a list of key principles from my

conceptual framework to be implemented if shared leadership is to be successful.

Many incidents of distributed leadership were witnessed at Small Town High

School. The principal is a very outgoing, friendly, and strong leader who relies quite

consistently on shared, transformational, and situational leadership in some form, to

varying degrees, and then when appropriate. The nine principles are explained below:

Finding 2: Identifying and consistently implementing principles of distributed

leadership are critical to increasing leadership capacity:

- *The principal practices a democratic style of leadership, making collaborative decisions focused on school improvement and school culture;*

- *The principal's primary responsibility is to orchestrate, support, and facilitate the faculty (Harris, 2008);*

- *The principal utilizes the organizational chart for distribution of labor;*

- *The principal creates a culture focused on strong interpersonal relationships and synergy;*

- *The principal values a supportive, nurturing community in which teachers feel valued, appreciated, and empowered;*

- *The principal promotes individual autonomy (Jones, 2014) and stresses collective responsibility;*

- *The principal encourages an authentic decision-making process and is able to let go of decision-making power to others;*

- *The principal instills shared decision-making into the culture of the school; and*

- *The principal relies on teamwork, communication, and creativity to generate results and increase organizational strength.*

Principle One: The principal practices a democratic style of leadership, making collaborative decisions focused on school improvement and school culture.

Distributed leadership is a dynamic collaborative process that emerges to

problem- solve and requires a shift in thinking to allow others to share in collaborative

decision-making (Bredeson, 2005; Conger & Pearce, 2003; Harris, 2008). Maureen

believes in a deep commitment to collective action for whole school success (Crowther et al., 2002), primarily through the inclusion of collaborative efforts in reaching shared goals. Collaboration, an ongoing creative process at Small Town High School, happens formally in faculty, department, and SL meetings and informally through conversations and interactions. According to one PL, "Nobody's set in their ways to the point where they won't listen to new ideas or try new things."

Maureen takes a responsive approach to problem-solving by utilizing a democratic process, which encourages broad participation (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). Each of the participants commented on the principal's democratic, participatory style of leadership. Maureen takes pride in listening to teachers' opinions and concerns, and using those views to shape final decisions. Maureen believes in a "win-win" mentality: "…because I constantly try to manipulate and massage things so that when a decision is made, everyone is going to be thrilled." The faculty was very confident in the principal's ability to lead the school, listen and hear the faculty's concerns, and make decisions once all of information and input was gathered.

Good leaders know that any given situation could require a different approach to leadership and requires flexibility and willingness to change their style to handle complex situations as they arise (Fullan, 2007; Snowden & Gorton, 2002). One PL noted how Maureen varies her leadership style depending on the situation: "I admire her leadership. She does a good job monitoring when to step in and when to step back." Since there is not one leadership style that meets everyone's needs, successful principals use situational leadership and change their leadership style to match people's needs, strengths, and willingness to perform certain tasks (Blanchard, 2000; Marzano et al., 2005).

Another PL commented on Maureen's focus on student needs:

> Maureen is really realistic about what's in the best interest of our kids. She doesn't get caught up in the bureaucracy but focuses on what is important for our students. She just follows the course of what she thinks is right. (Julie, personal interview, May 18, 2015)

Her effectiveness as a leader is defined by her interactions with others, and understanding their personalities and circumstances in a way that will bring out the best in people (Smith & Piele, 2006). Discussion is encouraged, and faculty input is utilized in critical decision-making, especially those decisions concerning programming and school culture. Through this approach, most decisions that are made tend to be supported by the vast majority of teachers. Faculty tend to be most supportive of initiatives when everyone is afforded the opportunity to express themselves and some type of decision is ultimately made. It is when lengthy conversations occur without outcomes that frustrates faculty.

While Maureen's general leadership style is participatory, not all decisions are made democratically or in a transparent manner, especially when there is an urgency to act, which is typical for a situational leader. Directing or telling (in situational leadership) is best implemented when decisions must be made quickly and efficiently, with the leader having complete control (Hersey et al., 2012). Maureen's reference to the independent projects clearly demonstrates this:

> Thank you for your input but I'm not letting go of it. We are not losing this. It would be wrong. Schools across the country are trying to get this right, and so are we. We aren't just going to walk away from this because it's not working right now. If you don't like it, what do we need to do to make it better? Many of us don't even know how it's working because we haven't even talked to the kids, so I will absolutely work with you to make this right but we aren't getting rid of it.
> (personal interview, April 22, 2015)

Maureen recognizes that leadership is not "a one size fits all" mentality (Marzano et al., 2005) and therefore, DL is not implemented with every decision, such as the hiring process, elimination of positions, or the writing of the School Improvement Plan. Since adaptability is a critical skill necessary to manage complex situations and ambiguity, situational leaders change their leadership style to match department chairs' willingness to perform certain tasks, as well as the needs and strengths of each department chair (Marzano et al., 2005). Some decisions are conveyed to the faculty, such as the awards assembly not being be held in the evening for honorees but held during the school day with all students attending. However, the format of the event changed due to complaints from previous years. Maureen announced at a faculty meeting that the five leadership groups would be working on five different issues the school was facing. Narrowing down various topics to five critical issues was done after faculty voiced concerns throughout the past few years. However, she alone picked the five issues.

In autocratic fashion, Maureen makes certain decisions herself and delegates activities to others (Hersey et al., 2012), allowing the DC advisory to focus on specific tasks rather than complex decisions. At one department chair meeting, Maureen informed DCs that the school committee asked for monthly presentations on how each department educates students. "For December we will have to prepare our presentations. I want you to be a part of that. Think about that and share that with your departments." Not only must DL be coordinated and planned but skills, strengths and expertise must be stressed (Spillane, 2008).

Without knowing Maureen's motivation, this incident could be viewed through two perspectives: Is she relying on people with expertise or deflecting responsibility and

ownership to them? As a principal, my response is a little of both. While the principal would have knowledge about general programming, specific details would be lacking. While presenting at school committee meetings is par for the course for building principals, who better to report on each department than department chairs, who have knowledge about specific courses and which instructional practices work best for each course? Maureen's reliance on DCs' content expertise is another example of implementing situational leadership.

Principle Two: The principal's primary responsibility is to orchestrate, support, and facilitate the faculty (Harris, 2008).

While collective responsibility is stressed over top down authority, distributed leadership, however, does not imply that formal leadership structures are absent. While the principal still has a critical role in a distributed leadership model, empowering others through motivation and non-coercive power is a vital component of the principal's responsibility (Rost, 1991). According to Lunenburg and Ornsetin (2004), it is the assumption that people want to do their best, and it is the administrator's job to enable them to do so by constantly improving the system in which they work.

Since faculty value the SL model, they supported Maureen when she restructured faculty and department meeting time for SL group meetings. Other examples of her orchestration range from providing coverage in order for PLs to adjust their proposals to allowing unconventional courses to be taught, encouraging self-management and leadership growth (Bass, 1990; Harris & Muijs, 2004).

While every participant commented and agreed that Maureen's leadership is participatory and democratic, one PL had an insightful point of view that demonstrates

Maureen's orchestration of decisions, which may not always be transparent. Maureen's

use of non-coercive power and influence to empower others to work for the overall good

of the school (Rost, 1991) can be demonstrated in the following example:

> No matter what, whatever topic she brings up … she already knows the results she wants. She doesn't bully anyone but is a master of flying around the issue and landing it. She may have already made up her mind but she encourages everyone to talk about it. It's manipulative but she says, based on their input, this is what we are doing. (Timothy, personal interview, June 10, 2015)

Maureen is a firm supporter of her faculty, which tend to march to their own

drummer and not fully embrace every DESE mandate. Unlike others schools that follow

state mandates to the T, Small Town High School is a bit radical and unconventional in

that it is unwilling to go blindly forward, particularly when it comes to reaccreditation or

MCAS. One PL commented that Small Town High School has "an anti-authoritative

thread running through it." Maureen admits that administrative paperwork is not a

priority in her role as principal, and she believes that state mandates do not accurately

reflect what students need nor do they increase student achievement. In fact, Small Town

High School was one of the first schools to boycott MCAS over ten years ago.

> [There] is a willingness not to just go blindly forward, particularly when it comes to state mandates … At the end of the day, it's a willingness to recognize together what is in the best interest of our students and be willing to do those things. (Stephen, personal interview, May 20, 2015)

Principle Three: The principal utilizes the organizational chart for distribution of labor.

At the heart of distributed leadership are the situational social interactions

between leaders and followers that focus on distribution of tasks and influence processes

(Bennett et al., 2003; Spillane, 2008). Maureen is cognizant of distributing leadership

roles to those that have skills and expertise to carry out leadership tasks, and to those asking for more leadership responsibilities. As PL Kim stated, "I want to help get things done. Please put me where you think I'll do the most good." By recognizing and utilizing formal and informal leaders, a common culture that functions positively and effectively (Harris, 2005) is created.

Since division of labor is the starting point of DL, Maureen utilizes an organizational chart, delineating and specifying certain individuals with certain responsibilities in day to day operations (Spillane, 2006). Six groups comprise the SL model; DCs, academic affairs, student management, data, communication and outreach, and student support services. While it appears that all six have equal status on the chart, through my observations and interviews it is evident that department chairs have more influence, authority, and power, and are the only group that meets regularly with Maureen.

Department chair responsibilities include: be an advisory board to the principal; facilitate department meetings, which are focused on the development of departmental goals and objectives; oversee department assessment, development and revision of curriculum; facilitate department budget development; facilitate communication between the department and administration; and meet with PLs as necessary. In this context, DCs are not simply doers or mediators but "directors of leadership activity" (Spillane et al., 2004, p. 19).

The responsibilities for the PLs are:

- Academic affairs: facilitate communication re: academic affairs such as graduation requirements, leveling and assessment;

- Student management: advisory to the assistant principal; student and teacher handbooks, co-curricular eligibility, etc.;

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- Data: student, academic, school wide data analysis; daily schedule; Edline;

- Communication and outreach: calendar, student and school life; co-curricular scheduling; central programming and communications; and

- Student support services: vocational/ career programs; 504/DCAP; case management, and alternative programming.

As my findings have indicated, these groups are quite generic and ambiguous, and will be analyzed in Question 1.

Principle Four: The principal creates a culture focused on strong interpersonal relationships and synergy.

DL is a group activity that works through and within social interactions and relationships (Bennett et al., 2003; Spillane, 2008), and I believe Maureen is strongest in this principle. She is a great communicator, which is necessary for successful shared leadership. Her confidence, sense of self-efficacy, and belief in the benefits of teamwork are inspiring. Maureen builds close relationships with her faculty, which is evident in her friendly conversations, lightheartedness, and positive interactions, which I observed in every meeting and informal interactions. One DC characterized Maureen in the following way: "… it's always heartfelt and genuine. She makes it easy to connect with her."

Since collaborative problem-solving cannot occur if people cannot work together (Stoll & Boman, 2005), the ability to work together and be interdependent, regardless of personality or situation, are critical in the successful implementation of the SL model. Trust and respect are the foundation of positive relationships and interactions, and has increased the level of autonomy within the school. Since Maureen trusts her faculty, she does not micromanage unless necessary, which is typical of a situational leader:

She's flexible and gives us a lot of independence. Maureen trusts that we respect each other and (there's) no need to micromanage. If you said you are going to do it, she trusts that you will get it done. (Mike, personal interview, May 28, 2105)

Principle Five: The principal values a supportive, nurturing community in which teachers feel valued, appreciated, and empowered.

Maureen's encouragement of team spirit plays a significant role in the school's culture (Hall et al., 2002), which was noted by n "She believes in us. We feel recognized, honored and championed…she is able to tap into our deeply ingrained sense of moral obligations to ourselves as people" (Mike, personal interview, May 28, 2015). When faculty feel heard, respected and "part of the solution" in the school's decision-making process, job satisfaction and organizational commitment to the school are likely to increase, which in turn translates to organizational effectiveness, positive student behaviors and learning outcomes (Dee et al., 2006; Harris, 2013).

It is evident that the focus of the school culture is supporting students' needs, regardless of what they are. "[The culture here is one of] flexibility, openness, a willingness to take on a challenge, a willingness to sit and listen to students that have new ideas…" (Mike, personal interview, May 28, 2015). One PL explained to me, "This is a miraculous school where we meet the needs of kids by any means possible- there is none of, "Oh, we can't do that- we just figure it out!" These needs include building and maintaining a positive climate. For example, students formed a football fan club, voicing cheers and chants, and singing "Sweet Caroline" at halftime with faculty support.

The level of respect given to Maureen is high in part due to her promotion of staff wellbeing and professionalism (Bass, 1990), which has increased their enthusiasm and morale (Sheppard et al., 2010). She regularly advocates for her faculty to be treated as

professionals and recognizes their extra efforts. When the district informed building

principals that teachers were expected to write 40 hours of curriculum focusing on

essential questions and performance assessments, Maureen requested financial

compensation. 92% of faculty participated:

> …sign up for 40 hours of work over the course of the summer…to do what you are going to have to do anyway (in the fall), so take the $500, and go out to dinner or do whatever you want with your $500 but sit on the beach and write your curriculum. (Maureen, personal interview, April 22, 2015)

Maureen publically praises teachers for their suggestions and recognizes their

achievements, which increases faculty's level of ownership. In explaining the inclusion

of one essential question per grade at a DC meeting, recognition was given to a specific

teacher: "This was Neil's idea and I love it!" Empowered teachers believe their

involvement is genuine and their opinion considered in the outcome of a decision.

Without empowerment, distributed leadership cannot materialize (Spillane et al., 2001;

Spillane et al., 2004).

Principle Six: The principal promotes individual autonomy (Jones, 2014) and stresses collective responsibility. Just as constructivism allows individuals to become responsible for their own learning, DL is more successful when ownership of problems is placed on the collective lap of the faculty.

A common thread among the participants is the belief that the autonomy given to

teachers plays a large role in the school's culture. "You feel the ownership that this is not

someone else's school; this is my school. This is not someone else's classroom; this is my

classroom" (Evan, personal interview, May 28, 2015). In order for ideas and energy to

come to fruition from the students and faculty, Maureen's attitude is, "This is on you",

which is an effective empowering strategy. According to PL Timothy,

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> She tells you what you need to do but lets you do it your own way. She doesn't force you to take the route she thinks is best unless you are being extremely ineffective or inefficient…I would call it 'suggested leadership'. (personal interview, June 10, 2015)

Maureen encourages autonomy and gives teachers flexibility to complete tasks.

> I want them to have data that is teacher designed and teacher driven on how kids are doing in their classes… however you want to do that. And people hit it out of the park…. I try to give them a lot of wiggle room to run with it. What's going to work for you?" (Maureen, personal interview, April 22, 2105)

Teachers are encouraged to explore new courses as they see fit. When Mike wanted to teach a new humanities course, Maureen encouraged Mike and never set boundaries.

> I came up with all of this on my own just by her saying, "Just do your thing".…¾ of what I teach is from scratch without supervision or conditions…all she cares about is if I follow through with what I said I was going to do. She trusts me because we have the same values and expectations…There is a lot less that you are told to do here. You have expectations that are clearly delineated and you are told to meet those expectations however you see fit…this is my script. I'm not doing what other people have told me to do. This is mine and I take ownership and I take pride in it. (Mike, personal interview, May 28, 2015)

Although DC desire autonomy, they do not necessarily want the responsibility that accompanies it. Maureen believes that teachers want to be told what to do because that is an easier route than planning things out on their own. When DCs are asked to set their own departmental agendas, they will often ask her what to do. "You tell me. It's your department and I'm not an English teacher. You are smart. You are educated. You are current."

Although leadership is the collective responsibility of all school community members (Lambert, 2002), some teachers do not necessarily want ownership over a particular problem and would rather have someone else solve the problem. Teachers

complained that there was an inconsistent enforcement of consequences. The student management team within the shared leadership model made "the golden rule", which is implemented by teachers today. The team developed a protocol that teachers need to implement before they send a student to the office, which significantly decreased the number of referrals: **"**Teachers and other individuals have to take ownership of certain decisions. It's not easy. Some people would rather just teach their class and blend in….(Stephen, personal interview, May 20, 2015). While the number of referrals has decreased due to the implementation of "the golden rule", the AP believes the additional steps required of teachers before sending a student to the main office is a mitigating factor.

Distributed leadership requires a responsive approach, being purposeful in sharing responsibility and decision-making (Harris, 2005; Spillane, 2008). All faculty are involved in the decision-making process at some level within the SL model, which empowers teachers and promotes ownership. When issues and problems become the responsibility of all, ownership encourages all to participate. According to the assistant principal, the problems of the school are everyone's problems, and therefore everyone needs to be included in the solution. All faculty are expected to take ownership of school issues, a mentality that is widely held throughout the school, yet to what degree is unclear. As previously mentioned, when teachers had issues with student tardiness, it was expected that the assistant principal would discipline the students. Once the student management SL group developed "the golden rule", placing ownership of the issue on teachers' laps, it was no longer a problem. Without empowerment, distributed leadership cannot materialize (Spillane et al., 2001; Spillane et al., 2004).

Although stressing ownership increases collective responsibility, what happens when a strong consensus is lacking? An example of putting ownership on teachers and turning the tide in support of a specific initiative can be found in the student support group's examination of the independent project (IP). The IP started in 2010 when a student finished all of his coursework and had exhausted all of his available options. A student participating in the IP would develop his own research project and spend the majority of the school day working on this project. An end of year presentation would be the culminating event. A vocal group of faculty have not been supportive of the IP for a variety of reasons, such as fear of increased workload, lack of clarity in oversight and accountability, or the amount of flexibility given to students. In fact, one teacher who is not in support of the program told the principal, "Well, I think you've alienated about 80% of the faculty and have used up a lot of capital on this one." Since Maureen values the program and wants to end the negativity surrounding IP, the student support group was given the task of ironing out any issues that may be preventing full faculty support of the initiative. The IP group began to problem-solve by collecting data and feedback through student, teacher and parent surveys:

> What are the three untouchables? We are keeping the IP so what three things have to stay and what three things should we change? So now we have people back to the table saying, "OK, let's fix it. We are a better school than this. (Maureen, personal interview, April 22, 2015)

By understanding the school's culture and reliance on collaborative decision-making, Maureen was able to resolve potential conflict and manage change more effectively and efficiently (Tierney, 1988). Maureen understood that if faculty did not have input in this decision, support and commitment for this initiative would be lacking.

Principle Seven: The principal encourages an authentic decision-making process and is able to let go of decision-making power to others.

Evidence of empowering faculty to be influential and make decisions (Camburn & Han, 2009; Harris, 2008) was apparent in faculty and shared leadership meetings. These meetings were facilitated by teachers and examined school initiatives. All teachers were either placed or self-selected into shared leadership groups, each with a particular focus. If faculty voted to pursue an initiative, all faculty agreed to move forward regardless of their personal feelings. When the mini-course proposal was not approved by faculty, Maureen reminded teachers that while the issue has been discussed numerous times during the past six years, "the faculty have spoken and we will not be revisiting this topic again."

Relinquishing power can be difficult but Maureen is comfortable doing so with certain decisions or situations. Examples include the implementation of the SL model and the Farm to School student initiative. If a principal can harness the capacity of DCs and relinquish some power and authority, then increases in morale, teacher self-efficacy, school culture, student achievement, and organizational sustainability are likely to occur (Hallinger & Heck, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2004). However, this does not mean that every decision within DL needs to be made collectively. As an effective and situational leader, Maureen knows when to relinquish power and when to hold it. Eliminating department supervisors and not fully utilizing DC as an advisory board are examples of Maureen's monocratic actions.

Principle Eight: Shared decision-making is instilled in the culture of the school.

There is a need for a strong consensus among the faculty in part due to the enormous scope of the principal's position, which is mentioned by all participants. "She

can't do it all. You have to rely on people who can help you make it happen" (Julie,

personal interview, May 18, 2015). In fact, Maureen believes that she rarely makes a

decision that impacts people without their input:

> You don't always see that leaders want that participation (in other schools) or if they do, they make it feel like you are participating when really you have no say. Maureen actually listens. We do have a say and sometimes she goes against what she wants to do. (Julie, personal interview, May 18, 2015)

Since Maureen listens to her faculty and appears to either involve them in the

final decision-making process or has weighed their input before voicing her final

decision, it is evident that there is a deep commitment to collective action for whole

school success (Crowther et al., 2002), primarily through the inclusion of these

collaborative efforts. Collegial discussions are held at faculty meetings and address such

important topics as pull outs, the need for s self-survey, independent projects, graduation

requirements, or mini-courses.

Principle Nine: The principal relies on teamwork, communication, and creativity to generate results and increase organizational strength.

Strong interpersonal relationships are a cornerstone of DL, and Maureen's

effectiveness is defined by her interactions with faculty (Smith & Piele, 2006) and level

of understanding and developing people (Mintrop & Papazian, 2003). Reliance on

teamwork increases performance (Hall et al., 2002), and was evident in every SL meeting

from people volunteering to make the PowerPoint slides to formulating action plans

together. While people had differences of opinions, they worked together to achieve a

common goal.

I chose to attend all of the SL meetings focused on graduation requirements in order to observe the decision-making process from start to finish. Teachers brought a variety of thoughtful ideas to the shared leadership group. The PL challenged his team to be reflective of student needs, question assumptions, and approach the assigned task with creativity and innovativeness (Bass, 1990). Some ideas were passed over quickly while others became stepping stones for action plans. Other major ideas were discussed at length without any resolution (i.e., Warrior credits, a life skills course). At the fourth meeting they were dismissed because "we need to put a plan in place." A variety of broad topics were mentioned, some quite passionately yet others completely overlooked (specific course requirements). It was evident that a strong consensus was needed for an idea to grow and every idea grew ambiguously and creatively. While observing the student management team discuss graduation requirements, the following concepts emerged:

- Increasing graduation requirements or requiring a minimum and maximum number of credits annually;

- Creating specialty diplomas;

- Requiring all seniors to take a life skills course, which would include a variety of topics, such as how to fix a flat tire or write a check;

- Limiting the number of study halls a student takes;

- Proposing new volunteer opportunities and mandatory community service;

- Senior capstone projects; and

- Senior portfolios, measuring progress towards individual goals.

Ambiguity allowed for discretion and the PL to follow the path deemed most appropriate. The group's task to examine graduation requirements was so broad that the group spent considerable time clarifying the task. Maureen raised individual and collective efficacy by encouraging the group to take any direction they wanted (Bass, 1990). The group had the flexibility to review graduation requirements, increase or decrease them, or completely revise them. Since teachers have raised the issue of graduation requirements over the past several years, this was the faculty's opportunity to find resolution and put an end to the topic. While the group had lengthy discussions pertaining to graduation requirements, further research was not done, and state and other local school requirements were not mentioned.

The PL was very positive and adaptive, and took his responsibility very seriously, typing up notes after every session and developing the group's PowerPoint presentation. He encouraged keeping open lines of communication by sharing all ideas and promoted a safe environment and full group participation (Bass, 1990). Since the group was comprised of like-minded individuals who held high expectations, collaboration appeared easier. Creativity was flowing. It was interesting to watch how topics narrowed over three sessions, and how each idea seemed to have a life of its own, in the true fashion of the *Garbage Can Model*, which will be discussed later. Certain individuals felt strongly about certain proposed ideas and advocated for their positions repeatedly, such as changing graduation requirements for ESL students or teaching specific life skills, such as changing a flat tire. Through the social constructivist lens, no one was bothered that everyone saw issues differently. They accepted each other's opinions and seemed comfortable accepting the ambiguity that was apparent in the meetings.

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Discussion of Findings Related to Question One: How do department chairs

approach the ambiguity that is inherent in the position?

According to Burke and Church (1992), "if change in organizations is becoming the rule rather than the exception, it is evident that one of the skills needed to manage change effectively is the ability to work in and within ambiguous situations and environments" (p. 310). Just as ambiguity is inherent in DL and schools in general, it is also inherent in the role of department chairs (Harris, 2007; Weick, 1976).

Table 4.1. Department Chair Job Description

Qualifications:	Job Goals:
demonstrated interest in shared leadership	to facilitate department meetings and department assessment, development and revision of curriculum
demonstrated organizational skills	to facilitate department budget development
demonstrated ability to facilitate discussions among and across disciplines	to facilitate department meetings focused on the development of departmental goals and objectives
demonstrated effective communication	to facilitate communication between departments and administration
other qualifications as established by the district	

The DC job description was written by Maureen and the union, and lists vague qualifications and job goals. As shown in the above chart "other qualifications as established by the district" is listed, which could include any number of specifications, such as mandating CAGS, requiring national certification, or having previous leadership experience. Facilitating department assessments is broad and ambiguous, as well, and could encompass requiring common assessments, reviewing all tests and quizzes, or even assessing MCAS item analysis.

Finding 3: Ambiguity is ignored by DCs and PLs yet embraced by administration.

While Maureen interprets the general DC job description broadly as to purposely address a variety of topics, DCs choose to specifically follow the job description as written and only perform clearly identified tasks, purposefully avoiding and ignoring ambiguity. The same two reasons were given to me by all participants: the "labor mentality" of the union, as well as the bitter feelings from the elimination of department supervisors in 2009.

The responsibilities for the PLs within the SL model that were previously addressed earlier in this chapter are broad and ambiguous, as well. While PLs are primarily facilitators, there is a focus on facilitative, managerial, and administrative tasks for DCs. The expectation of instructional leadership is absent, which was the primary role of department supervisors. While many DCs in secondary schools typically oversee DDM implementation, analyze data, mentor new staff or plan professional development, this instructional leadership is lacking at Small Town High School. While DCs and PLs view these tasks as critical in the success of the school, they are not willing to undertake these responsibilities without financial compensation regardless of organizational commitment or loyalty towards Maureen.

While DCs and PLs ignore ambiguity, the principal and assistant principal openly embrace ambiguity, reflecting an optimistic self-belief that one can perform difficult tasks or handle adversity in various domains (Donlan, 2014; Pajares & Schunk, 2001; Savelsbergh et al., 2012; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995; Weick, 1976). Maureen believes she utilizes ambiguity to her advantage to improve leadership practice: "If I listen to and

take... into account (each teacher's opinions), I really allow that to keep me from just making decisions because I constantly try to manipulate and massage things so that when a decision is made, everyone will be thrilled." I witnessed this at a faculty meeting. Once topics had been explained to faculty, one teacher questioned why teaching and learning was not the focus of any of the groups. The librarian jumped in and included the teacher's concerns into her group's agenda, although it didn't quite fit her group's agenda of examining independent projects. This quick exchange was immediately approved by Maureen, avoiding a lengthy conversation about instruction. The librarian's willingness to think on her feet, problem solve and be adaptable are benefits that teachers do not associate with ambiguity (Weick, 1976). The dynamic, collaborative process that emerged to problem-solve was facilitated through Maureen's broad-based leadership (Conger & Pearce, 2003; Harris, 2008).

The assistant principal's high level of self-efficacy and organizational commitment are evident in his perceptions about his own job description, which take an adaptive approach towards ambiguity. His sense of self-efficacy influences his approaches to goals, tasks, and challenges (Luszcynska & Schwarzer, 2005). People with strong efficacious outlooks approach ambiguity as an asset and necessary adaptive skill (Donlan, 2014; Savelsbergh et al., 2012, Weick, 1976). He views difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered, and not threats to be avoided. ".… Whatever comes up. You really can't have a written job description. Sometimes you don't know unless it's put in front of you. Just do what needs to be done in the moment." He embraces the challenges of his position and does not complain about his tasks and responsibilities.

Since research (Donlan, 2014; Pajares & Schunk, 2001; Savelsbergh, et al., 2012; Weick, 1976) suggests that people with a high sense of self-efficacy and organizational commitment are more adaptable and thus able to perceive ambiguity positively, I examined participants' perceptions through a written survey. This group of 13 leaders (those that agreed to take the survey) has the perception of possessing a high degree of self-efficacy, problem-solving skills, and resourcefulness. While participants certainly worked hard and accepted challenges with confidence, I was unable to gauge the validity of these results since challenges were limited in scope. Moreover, I did not see evidence of resourcefulness. For instance, lack of research was evident in SL groups. Suggestions were broad and lacked details in implementation. Topics such as graduation requirements or offering senior mini-courses were brainstormed yet no one suggested contacting other schools, researching logistics, or even speaking with their own guidance department.

An X marked below depicts Maureen's responses:

General Self-efficacy statement:	Exactly True	Mod. True	Hard. True	≠ True
I can always mange to solve difficult problem if I try hard enough.	76.92% X	23.08%	0	**0**
If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.	0	95.83% X	4.17%	0
It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals	76.92%	23.08% X	0	0
I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	61.54% X	38.46%	0	0
Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.	38.45% X	53.85%	7.7%	0
I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	69.23% X	30.77%	0	0

I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.	42.31% X	57.69%	0	0
When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.	53.85% X	46.15%	0	0
If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.	50% X	50%	0	0
I can usually handle whatever comes my way.	88.46% X	11.54%	0	0

Figure 4.2. Self-efficacy Statement Survey Results

Survey results revealed high levels of self-efficacy, reflecting an optimistic self-belief that they could perform difficult tasks or handle adversity in various domains (Donlan, 2014; Pajares & Schunk, 2001; Savelsbergh et al., 2012; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995; Weick, 1976). However, DCs and PLs were not so eager to accept and embrace ambiguity. While the faculty were creative and worked collaboratively to problem-solved issues, they did not perceive any benefit to ambiguity. According to one DC, "All of this would work better if we had clear job descriptions, if we knew by contract that we could tell another teacher that they weren't doing a good job." According to another DC:

> …..I don't like ambiguity. I like a hierarchy, know what happens when decisions are   made, know where you take those…I'd like to know what my role is very clearly so I can follow it because if I know it, I will follow it but if I don't, then I get very frustrated quickly and with others that their role isn't being fulfilled. (Julie, interview, May 18, 2015)

The concern that administration may not be able to manage all of the tasks was not identified by any of the participants. "Anything that is not specifically labeled as someone's written responsibility gets dumped on Maureen and Stephen's lap…people don't see things falling through the cracks" (Timothy, personal interview, June 10, 2015).

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However, one PL felt that DCs could help administration resolve conflicts if they were given the responsibility to do so. Since most people avoid conflict when possible, this is one task they will not voluntarily undertake. Maureen is often frustrated with DCs' and PLs' lack of initiative although she understands their rationale. However, she does not hesitate to ask for assistance or advice when needed.

Finding 4: While there is a prominent desire for clarity and direction, faculty appreciate the flexibility and autonomy ambiguity provides. While DCs and PLs would prefer greater clarity, the principal prefers the broad generalizations to keep the scope of responsibilities from being too narrow.

All participants commented on how much they appreciated Maureen's flexibility and viewed it as one of her strengths. According to Timothy, "Maureen tells you what you need to do but let's you do it your own way. She doesn't force you to take the route she thinks is best unless you are being extremely ineffective." DCs are empowered when they can pursue any avenue they wish, from offering new courses to planning school initiatives. Mike, a veteran teacher, explained how he developed a new course: "Three quarters of what I do in a day I created from scratch without any supervision or conditions. Just write it up. If it works, it works and if it doesn't, it doesn't. All she cares about is if I follow through with what I said I was going to do."

While flexibility, creativity and "thinking outside of the box" are benefits of ambiguity (Donlan, 2014; Savelsbergh et al., 2012; Weick, 1976), this flexibility is interpreted as lack of communication by some PLs, who believe that expectations have not been clearly communicated to faculty, especially in regards to the SL model. Examples of vague, generalized expectations are plentiful. Academic affairs is charged

with facilitating communication re: academic affairs, such as graduation requirements, leveling and assessment. Do new course offerings fall under this category? Do they ensure the implementation of school-wide rubrics? Do they plan remediation for MCAS high needs students? The term "academic affairs" is broad and can encompass a variety of topics that increase ambiguity, which can negatively affect morale, work productivity, ability to collaborate, and student achievement (Gomes & Knowles, 1999).

Maureen embraces the ambiguity within the SL model. Instead of shooting down an idea, Maureen encourages faculty to be creative. She asked faculty the general question, "What can be done to improve your departments?" This broad question allows for departments to have wiggle room and flexibility to explore a variety of options without any limitations (Donlan, 2014; Savelsbergh et al., 2012; Weick, 1976). For example, instead of dismissing the idea by science teachers to eliminate labs from all AP science courses, Maureen encouraged them to think of ways to maintain high AP scores without labs. By offering emotional support, leadership capacity is increased (Harris & Muijs, 2004). Brainstorming creative solutions, such as extra tutorials or more in-depth content analysis, strengthened the argument to not only keep labs but to increase time in labs! Although Maureen could easily have vetoed the idea of eliminating labs, she allowed teachers to examine their values and beliefs, and draw their own assumptions and conclusions, strengthening the argument to keep labs and thus, building leadership capacity. Although this took time, she now had buy in and support to keep the labs.

When the science department discussed school-wide lab rubrics, Maureen loved the idea of school-wide lab expectations but did not provide the department with any direction as to how to create and develop these rubrics. The scope of these improvements

was not limited or steered in any specific direction. In discussions it became apparent that science teachers did not have enough lab equipment, and Maureen offered support by transferring $20,000 to help alleviate this pressure. Maureen empowered the science department to come to their own conclusions and collaboratively problem-solve, encouraging self-management and leadership growth (Bass, 1990; Harris & Muijs, 2004). When people feel as if they are part of a solution, job satisfaction and commitment increase (Harris, 2013).

A great deal of ambiguity exists in complex mandates and documents, such as evaluations, District Determined Measures (DDMs), professional development, and the writing the School Improvement Plan. While some seek guidance, most teachers do not ask for clarification and hope the mandates disappear. When I spoke with one PL, he was unsure about DDMs, who approved them or how they fit into the evaluation process. In his view, DDMs really hadn't been discussed with the faculty. However, Maureen's perception differed in that she felt that "people hit it out of the park…I try to give them a lot of wiggle room to run with it. What's going to work for you?" The lack of clearly delineated expectations was purposeful in order to give faculty flexibility to individualize their evaluation binders yet was not clearly communicated to teachers.

DC were clear on the definition of ambiguity but did not associate ambiguity with creativity or flexibility. While DCs stressed the focus of doing everything possible to meet student needs during our interviews, I found their perspective towards ambiguity puzzling and contradictory. One DC stated,

> Like kids, we like to be told what to do so you don't have to think too much. It's exhausting to figure out what you're going to do all the time…everything we're trying to create is out of the box and sometimes that's messy (Jim, DC round table discussion, April 30, 2015).

While participants expressed the desire to have expectations clearly labeled in order to avoid ambiguity, they actually benefited considerably from the flexibility, creativity and autonomy ambiguity provides (Donlan, 2014; Savelsbergh et al., 2012; Weick, 1976). For example, SL groups were encouraged to think outside of the box while addressing the various school issues. No restrictions were put forth by Maureen. PLs were excited to present their proposals because they had the flexibility to share what information they deemed relevant, in whatever format they chose. They also had the flexibility to plan additional meetings with their SL groups. Other examples of flexibility included the librarian forming a new SL group to address the concerns of a group specifically focused on teaching and learning; faculty forming the protocols for independent projects**;** students complaining about cafeteria food and creating the Farm to School stand; and the ability to design new courses.

When Maureen gives people the freedom to determine their initiatives broadly, faculty and students are more willing to follow through with the initiatives and goals because they have buy in and are not limited in their choices. When people feel heard, respected and "part of the solution" in the school's decision-making process, job satisfaction and commitment increases (Harris, 2013).

Finding 5: While several different types of power can be found at Small Town High School, they often overlap and are dependent upon situational context, further increasing ambiguity.

Most ambiguity that exists for DCs at Small Town High School encompasses notions of power. DCs have a great sense of autonomy and take pride in their expertise and their positional power, which provides them the credibility within their departments

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for their authority to act (Little, 1995). They view themselves as active players in the

school, influencing the school and its initiatives.

While DCs feel they do not have power, it is evident that their authority

influences the behavior and beliefs of their peers (Sun et al., 2013). DCs are mindful that

influence is critical, regardless of the type of power held, and that influence can persuade

department members to act in certain ways, such as being diligent with paperwork or

arriving on time to meetings.

The authority and power perceived by DCs and PLs differs considerably, and

when individuals do not have a clear understanding of their authority, role ambiguity

increases (Tubre & Collins, 2000). While PLs believe both groups have similar authority

and power, DC were very clear that they had greater authority and power. Through

observations and interviews, PLs and DCs felt they had influence but not authority over

instructional leadership. While faculty did not always seek the instructional expertise of

DCs, faculty felt they could turn to any of their colleagues for advice or expertise.

According to Evan (personal interview, May 28, 2015),

> (I look towards) my colleagues (for instructional leadership). We have
> wonderful, intelligent people in my department. Our offices are in a
> central location, which is great since we collaborate all the time. We can
> bounce ideas off of each other.

Every DC informed me that he/she would not call someone out in his/her

department for bad behavior nor would he/she offer suggestions to improve practice. If,

however, Maureen or a department member asked for assistance, DCs would not hesitate

to offer support but would still feel uncomfortable reprimanding a colleague. PL Kim

complained that people frequently come late to her meetings, and she feels that while she

has collegial leadership and status that she does not have any authority to address the

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issue. "I don't have the right to call people out on their professional behavior in my role as PL." DCs need credibility within their departments for their authority to act (Little, 1995). She would only address the issue if Maureen asked.

DCs and PLs have not had professional development or training and rely heavily upon trait theory. A few DCs informed me that if they were taught the skills necessary to resolve conflicts, motivate colleagues, or improve departmental relationships, DCs and PLs may feel more comfortable taking additional leadership responsibilities and handling departmental issues on their own. However, this viewpoint contradicts the self-efficacy survey results in which DCs and PLs are confident they can handle any problem or unexpected event that comes their way and can solve most problems if the necessary effort is invested. Utilizing the power of influence, DCs and PLs could resolve conflicts and improve departmental relationships (Harris, 2008).

Discussion of Findings Related to Question Two: How does the culture of the school influence or support the shared leadership model?

According to Bryk and Schneider (2003), a critical aspect of distributed leadership and a school's success is its organizational culture, which is formed through everyday interactions among students, teachers and administrators. This culture can foster collaboration and a shared commitment to school goals (Lunenberg & Ornstein, 2004). The positive school culture was evident as I walked through the school. Student artwork, Bean Sprout ads, athletic banners and Warrior Way posters adorned all of the hallway walls. The interactions between students and faculty were friendly, joking, and caring, enhancing the positive, energetic atmosphere of the school.

Finding 6: Shared, collaborative decision-making is instilled in the culture of the school.

My study revealed principles of distributed leadership that were implemented by Maureen, which demonstrate that school culture is the crux of the SL model. These principles, previously examined earlier in this chapter, shape Maureen's leadership style and influence the culture of the school:

- Maureen practices a democratic style of leadership and makes collaborative decisions focused on school improvements and school culture;

- Maureen creates a culture focused on strong relationships and synergy;

- Maureen values a supportive, nurturing community in which teachers feel valued, respected, and empowered;

- Maureen stresses autonomy (Jones, 2014) and collective responsibility;

- Maureen instills shared decision-making into the culture of the school; and

- Maureen relies on teamwork, communication, and creativity to generate results. Maureen distributes leadership in a variety of ways, including implementing a SL

model, facilitating email conversations, encouraging professional development department days, encouraging faculty and student ownership, and expecting active faculty participation. When department chairs feel heard, respected, and "part of the solution" in the school's decision-making process, leadership capacity, job satisfaction, and commitment to the school are likely to increase, which in turn translates to positive student outcomes (Harris, 2013). Since Maureen listens to her faculty and appears to either involve them in the final decision-making process (i.e., graduation requirements, mini courses, and independent projects) or has weighed their input before voicing her final decision, it is evident that there is a deep commitment to collective action for whole

school success (Crowther et al., 2002). In fact, Maureen believes that she rarely makes a

decision that impacts people without their input:

> You don't always see that leaders want that participation (in other schools)
> or if they do, they make it feel like you are participating when really you
> have no say. Maureen actually listens. We do have a say and sometimes
> she goes against what she wants to do. (Julie, personal interview, May 18,
> 2015)

DL is a dynamic collaborative process that emerges to problem-solve (Conger &

Pearce, 2003; Harris, 2008). Through collaboration within the SL model at Small Town

High School culture and relationships are strengthened, and productivity increased

(Contractor & Ehrlich, 1993; Dee et l., 1992; Lambert, 1998)**.** The epistemological lens

of social constructivism supports this premise. Teachers learn from one another by

sharing ideas within social interactions, which can alter their perspectives and norms, and

thus influencing their decisions and actions. Social interactions, according to Jaworski

(1995), are the basis for constructing knowledge and promote collaboration, collective

problem-solving, and sharing of ideas. Since they collaboratively create a culture with

shared meaning, faculty are more productive than when working in isolation (Lambert,

1998).

Collaboration is an ongoing creative process at Small Town High School and

happens formally in faculty meetings, department, and SL meetings, and informally

through conversations and interaction in department offices. Every department member

has a desk in the departmental office area, access to resources, and at times common

planning time. Further collaboration occurs through various meetings and weekly faculty

email conversations. Some departments socialize outside of school, which further builds

a sense of community. By instilling a collaborative culture, relationships strengthen,

morale improves, cohesiveness develops, and student achievement increases (Contractor & Ehrlich, 1993; Dee et al., 1992; Lambert, 1998).

Collaboration can be messy at times. Some individuals freely voice their opinions, sometimes at the expense of others. Kim explained to me that when she runs her PL group, she tries for a group consensus, giving equal air time to group members. "People know when someone has a strong opinion- I just have to not let that be the only voice. I have to make room for other voices." Collaboration can also be messy by the volume of solutions and suggestions, as well as the level of practicality of solutions. For example, as a current principal, the logistics of scheduling would have an important role in determining if I were to run mini-courses for seniors or even invest time in those discussions.

Finding 7: The SL model is culturally specific.

When the SL model was first introduced at Small Town High School, it was not warmly embraced by teachers and negatively influenced the school culture. Teachers were still bitter from the budget cuts of 2009, which eliminated department supervisor positions. It took a couple of years of revamping the model and rebuilding trust to change the climate. The proactive change in the shared leadership model empowered teachers and changed the demeanor of the groups, which positively influenced the school culture. "It's been a huge change- we are now proactive. It's changed … how we go about things- we are more excited. There's more drive to get things done. We are a little more creative in our thinking, as well" (Evan, personal interview, May 28, 2015).

The school is known for its positive school culture, "the essence of the organization" (Lunenberg & Ornstein, 2004, p. 94), which is reflected in the comments

posted on online reviews at www.greatschools.org. "One of the greatest strengths is the sense of community that is nurtured by shared leadership." "The school culture appreciates individuality, quality of instruction and diversity of population." "The principal praises the work of faculty to everyone that will listen."

The school culture or "the Warrior Way" defines Small Town High School and is very unique in that 27% of teachers are graduates of the high school. Mike (personal interview, May 28, 2015) describes the culture of the school or "the way we do things around here" (Barth, 2001) as flexible, open, and a willingness to take on challenges. There is an interest in listening to students' new ideas. Possessing and communicating this type of cultural message cultivates a sense of community and commitment (Contractor & Ehrlich, 1993). When students complained about cafeteria food, Maureen heard their concerns and empowered them to find solutions. This empowerment leads to increased organizational commitment (Jermier & Berkes, 1979).

Finding 8: There is ambiguity in how school culture is defined.

Interestingly, the Warrior Way was described in different terms in every interview yet pride, openness, and a sense of identity were constant. According to the assistant principal, it means different things to different people. "For some it means high academic expectations, community, provide whatever you need…this is in keeping in the spirit of what we think is important at Small Town High School."

Some believe the Warrior Way symbolizes the identity of the school in a traditional sense, such as excelling in sports. PL Tim took it a step further: "Winning for us has always been a part of the Warrior Way. I tell my kids that winning is important and it's not just how you play the game." Another interpretation of the Warrior Way is

constantly supporting and encouraging students. This can be seen at football games when students have chants, cheers, songs and props to show their support. These positive views about the Warrior Way increase morale and sustain empowerment for faculty and students. These shared values establish norms, influence daily behavior, and shape the identity of the school (Barth, 2001).

One PL did not view the Warrior Way as positively as the other participants:

> I'm not a huge fan of the Warrior Way. I don't disagree with it but it rubs me the wrong way because the perception that those that graduated or have been here forever have this vision of what Small Town High School was and therefore should always be. It feels different than that. It's not just about traditions but it's a sense of who we are….the school from the 80's should not be the same school in 2015….some have a really positive, deeply ingrained sense of why the school is important but it means different things to different people….(not everyone thinks) it's about high expectations, community and providing whatever you need…it's a special thing but a double-edged sword… (we are) too insular. (Kim, personal interview, May 20, 2015)

Finding 9: Positive interrelationships and teamwork within the school are central to a positive school culture.

Synergy or the ability to collaboratively problem-solve are critical in the successful implementation of SL. Therefore, people need to be able to work together (Stoll & Boman, 2005). Those interviewed, including Maureen, feel comfortable approaching a colleague or administrator for advice or help to solve a problem. "People seem comfortable going the extra mile to help Maureen. There's this sense of community where we support each other" (Julie, personal interview, May 18, 2015).

Not only do teachers look to each other for support, they turn to Maureen for guidance on a consistent basis, which is evident in her open door policy. Even with the door closed during our interviews, people knocked on the door to ask Maureen a variety

of questions. She listens to faculty concerns and addresses them appropriately: "…. by really listening to her department chairs, she switched to this problem-solving model" (Stephen, personal interview, May 20, 2015).

Maureen values a supportive, nurturing community in which teachers feel heard and appreciated. She praises faculty often and is receptive of faculty suggestions, especially those that benefit the students.

> I did approach her about the need to meet with (other) teachers more frequently and she said, "That's it. Let's do this every week for ten minutes." That's been very effective. Every week, a different student will be the focus, so different teachers attend weekly. (Julie, personal interview, May 18, 2015)

Faculty are encouraged to express their concerns and suggestions openly without feeling they will offend administration or peers. During the faculty meetings, the following concerns were voiced:

- Mini-courses: "Seems like a lot of work for three days. If we do this, I will be a neutral participant."

- Pull-outs: "Teachers need to back each other up. If a teacher receives the form on the day of the activity and checks the box marked 'concerned', where is the follow through?"

Finding 10: Higher organizational commitment results in a stronger school culture (Dee et al., 2006), which in turn leads to more effective distributed leadership.

Organizational commitment refers to the extent to which employees see themselves as belonging to an organization (Meyer, Kam, Goldenberg, & Bremner, 2103), and is critical for organizational effectiveness (Dee, Henkin, & Singleton, 2006). Faculty are loyal, believe in the school's value, and exert effort on behalf of the school. One faculty member has not called in sick in the twenty years he has worked there!

Committed employees display more positive attitudes and have lower absenteeism rates than uncommitted employees (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993).

Since organizational commitment is closely associated with school culture (Day et al., 2007: Dee et al., 2006; Leithwood et al., 2008), I was curious to understand DCs' perceptions of their own levels of organizational commitment. Based on the results of the organizational commitment survey, participants' organizational commitment was not as high as their perceived levels of self-efficacy. According to researchers (Mowday et al., 1982), those who have a high sense of organizational commitment tend to have a strong belief in the goals, readily lend their support, and feel a strong need to maintain their membership in the organization. Participants were willing to put forth a great deal of effort beyond what is expected and spoke positively about the school with others. Level of loyalty was measured at both extremes, and therefore I believe the question was misread by half of the participants.

Based on responses heard in the interviews, I would have expected this score to be higher, in large part due to the positive school climate and Maureen's transformational leadership style. Maureen models adaptability, organizational commitment, self-efficacy, and a positive attitude, theoretical construct that develop a positive school atmosphere (Hallinger & Heck, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2004). Transformational leaders have higher levels of performance and satisfaction than groups led by other types of leaders (Riggio, 2009). The fact that 27% faculty and staff are graduates of Small Town High School is proof of this commitment.

Organizational Commitment Statement:	Exactly True	Moderately True	Hardly True	Not True
I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond what is expected in order to help this school and its students be successful.	66.67% **X**	33.33%	0	0
I talk up this school to my family and friends as a great school to work in.	72.22% **X**	27.78%	0	0
I feel very little loyalty to this school.	44%	0	0	56% **X**
It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this school.	13%	**X**	25%	62%
This school really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.	50%	50% **X**	0	0
There's not too much to be gained by sticking with this school indefinitely.	0	0	11%	89% **X**
For me, this is the best of all possible school to work in.	50% **X**	50%	0	0

Figure 4.3. Organizational Commitment Statement Survey Results

Summary

This chapter examined the use of DL at Small Town High School, citing principles of practice and examples of implementation. Maureen is a situational leader who implements DL when necessary and to varying degrees. Her reliance on and role-modeling of collaborative decision-making and problem-solving, building relationships, teamwork and autonomy were evident in her transformational leadership style. Although my data did not support the use of self-efficacy and organizational commitment by

department chairs to harness ambiguity, data did support Maureen's view of ambiguity as a necessary, adaptive skill.

School culture is at the crux of shared leadership, and the successes of both are dependent upon positive relationships and teamwork. Empowerment and organizational commitment of teachers increase when autonomy and flexibility are provided, which leads to job satisfaction and positive morale. Since school culture and DL are culturally specific, a principle that is successfully implemented in one school may not be effective in another.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF STUDY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Study and Findings

Due to increased accountability, demands, and responsibilities, principals struggle to effectively lead schools. Therefore, they look to strengthen the structure and operations of schools by utilizing distributed leadership and the role of department chairs to build leadership capacity and improve school culture (Chance & Lingren, 1988; Elmore, 2000; Harris, 2005; Spillane, 2008).

Unfortunately, ambiguity within distributed leadership and the role of department chair complicate effective implementation of distributed leadership by impeding task completion and successful navigation of relationships (Burns & Gmelch, 1992; Mehta et al., 2010). However, ambiguity does not need to be an obstacle to effective role performance and task completion. Due to ever changing administrative personnel, complex and at times paradoxical mandates and school-based problems, a certain level of ambiguity will always exist in schools. Therefore, school leaders should accept ambiguity not as a stigma but as an asset and necessary adaptive skill that gives people the confidence and motivation to navigate the unknown.

Another critical aspect of distributed leadership is a school's organizational culture or "the way we do things around here" (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Barth, 2001), which can positively or negatively influence any school initiative. Since organizational culture can foster collaboration and a shared commitment to school goals, which in turn can build leadership capacity, the school culture's capacity to influence the success or demise of any shared leadership model was explored.

Since research is broad and generic in terms of which specific principles of distributed leadership foster the greatest results, this study provided insight into how a principal applies the various principles of distributed leadership and manages ambiguity. An ethnographic qualitative approach was implemented, relying on a descriptive single case study strategy of inquiry to examine the unique relationship and interactions that exist between a principal and her department chairs to identify specific examples of distributed leadership and incidents of role ambiguity. Since research supports that modeling self-efficacy, adaptability, and organizational commitment while offering targeted support improves morale, school culture, and student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2004), I encourage principals to use these same theoretical constructs to develop a positive school atmosphere and harness ambiguity for more effective DL.

Site selection was deliberate since my primary objective was to enhance my own professional practice and learn new strategies to maximize distributed leadership. I spent a considerable amount of time at Small Town High School in western Massachusetts with a student population of 530, individually and in small groups interviewing the principal, department chairs, and project leaders of the shared leadership model. Direct non-participatory observations and analysis of site documents further increased my understanding of participants' perceptions of distributed leadership while demonstrating how various principles of distributed leadership were implemented.

Maureen distributes leadership in a variety of ways, including implementing a shared leadership model, facilitating email conversations, encouraging professional development department days, encouraging faculty and student ownership, and expecting

active faculty participation. Principles of distributed leadership were identified and

consistently implemented, which are critical to increasing leadership capacity:

- The principal practices a democratic style of leadership, making collaborative decisions focused on school improvement and school culture;

- The principal's primary responsibility is to orchestrate, support, and facilitate the faculty (Harris, 2008);

- The principal utilizes the organizational chart for distribution of labor;

- The principal creates a culture focused on strong interpersonal relationships and synergy;

- The principal values a supportive, nurturing community in which teachers feel valued, appreciated, and empowered;

- The principal promotes individual autonomy (Jones, 2014) and stresses collective responsibility;

- The principal encourages an authentic decision making process and is able to let go of decision making power to others;

- The principal instills shared decision making into the culture of the school; and

- The principal relies on teamwork, communication, and creativity to generate results and increase organizational strength.

As a situational leader, Maureen implements these principles on a regular basis but to

varying degrees, dependent upon situational context.

Since ambiguity is purposefully ignored at Small Town High School due to bitter

feelings towards Maureen's two year departure and the "labor mentality" stressed by the

union, my claim could not be supported. While ambiguity is ignored by DCs and PLs, it

is embraced by administration as a means to increase creativity, flexibility,

empowerment, and ownership. While there is a prominent desire for clarity and direction,

faculty appreciate the flexibility and autonomy ambiguity provides. While DCs and PLs

would prefer greater clarity, the principal prefers the broad generalizations to keep the

scope of responsibilities from being too narrow. While several different types of power

can be found at Small Town High School, they often overlap and are dependent upon situational context, further increasing ambiguity.

Shared leadership and school culture are closely interwoven and rely on positive relationships and teamwork. Shared, collaborative decision-making is instilled in the culture of the school, and the principal is able to let go of her autonomy. She was very clear in the faculty meetings that whatever decision faculty made would be upheld by all.

However, there is ambiguity in how school culture is defined. While 27% of faculty and staff graduated from Small Town High School, everyone had a different perspective towards the Warrior Way. A strong organizational commitment results in a positive school culture (Dee et al., 2006), which in turn leads to more effective distributed leadership.

Contributions to Research

Conducting research is important for obtaining new knowledge and contributing to the existing body of knowledge. This study provides a framework for maximizing leadership capacity and is significant in its attempt to address the apparent gap between the philosophy and actual implementation of distributed leadership. My research can be useful to any administrator building leadership capacity and is critical in my own professional practice. I have detailed specific examples of how leadership can be distributed through the implementation of a shared leadership model and a principal's promotion of collective responsibility, active participation, and collaboration. Specific principles of practice that maximize leadership capacity and focus on strong interpersonal relationships, empowerment, individual autonomy, and building a strong school culture

were identified. My study demonstrated that reliance on teamwork, communication, and creativity can generate results and increase organizational strength.

My conceptual framework stressed self-efficacy and organizational commitment as a means of accepting ambiguity. By stressing the flexibility, autonomy, and creativity ambiguity can provide, a principal can increase faculty confidence in order to navigate difficult situations and complex tasks. Increasing and stressing staff organizational commitment results in a stronger culture, as well.

School culture is the crux of shared leadership, and can be strengthened through collaboration. Through my research, it became evident that SL and school climate are closely intertwined and uniquely culturally specific. Both should be defined by the principal to maximize effectiveness since the SL model continuously evolves and grows to meet the needs of the school. School culture can also be strengthened through ownership. Just as constructivism allows individuals to become responsible for their own learning, DL is more successful when ownership of problems is placed on the collective lap of the faculty because ownership encourages all to participate.

Discussion of Unanticipated Findings

My nuanced findings can be attributed to the many moving pieces of distributed leadership. The decision-making process was organic- at times unorganized and random yet systematic at other times. While observing the SL graduation requirements group collaboratively problem-solve and make decisions, it was quite evident that distributed leadership cannot be thoroughly discussed without addressing the *Garbage Can Model*. As my study progressed, I became increasingly aware of the GCM, which was developed in reference to "ambiguous behaviors" (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972). This

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organizational decision process was developed to explain the pattern of decision-making

in organizations that experience extremely high uncertainty, such as growth and change

required in a school. Many times solutions are found in unclear, problematic

circumstances (Cohen et al., 1972). I witnessed how ambiguity characterized each step of

the decision-making process, from establishing goals to problem-solving solutions. What

is unique about this model is that the decision-making process is not seen as a sequence

of steps that begins with a problem and ends with a solution. At times, solutions appear

without problems being attached.

> An organization is a collection of choices looking for problems; issues and
> feelings looking for situations in which they might be aired; solutions
> looking for issues to which they might answer; and decision makers
> looking for work. Problems and solutions get attached by chance, and
> planning is largely symbolic and an excuse for interaction (Cohen et al.,
> 1972)

Cohen et al. (1972) further note that leaders make a difference in the GCM by

being sensitive to shifting interests and abandoning initiatives that get hopelessly

entangled with others. This was observed in the graduation SL group, in particular when

ELL students, and minimum and maximum credits were discussed. This organizational

decision theory concluded that participants of this shared leadership model did not follow

an orderly process when finding solutions to existing problems.

The attitude towards ambiguity was unexpected. Since bitter feelings still festered

about Maureen's two year departure and the budget cuts from 2009, DCs and PLs only

performed tasks that were expressly written in their job description. While faculty felt

strong loyalty and admiration towards building administration, no one felt apprehensive

about leaving tasks incomplete or leaving them at administration's doorstep, despite how

full their plates were. While the faculty were creative and were able to collaboratively problem-solve issues, they did not perceive any benefits of ambiguity.

I was strongly surprised by the strength of the Warrior Way. Since 27% of faculty and staff are graduates from Small Town High School, their desire to return is significant. It implies that something in the culture (i.e., teamwork, student centeredness, collaboration, school spirit or empowerment) has increased their organizational commitment to such a degree that graduates are so eager to return and teach. However, their organizational commitment is not so great as to fulfill ambiguous tasks.

Since I rely heavily upon the concepts of self-efficacy and organizational commitment to embrace ambiguity within my own professional practice, I was curious to observe ambiguity at another site. Evidence collected supported the notion that Maureen has a high degree of self-efficacy and organizational commitment, and views ambiguity as a positive, necessary adaptive skill. However, this notion did not entirely take root with DCs and PLs. Measuring participants' perceived levels of self-efficacy and organizational commitment was important to me since both greatly influence school culture. I was surprised that DCs and PLs scored high on self-efficacy and organizational commitment surveys yet were unwilling to let go of the bitterness to do ambiguous tasks. Had the fiscal crisis not occurred at Small Town High School, it would be interesting to note their perceptions toward ambiguity.

<u>Implications for Practice</u>

This study provides a framework for maximizing leadership capacity and contributes to the current empirical research on distributed leadership by clarifying principles of practice for effective DL and advancing the understanding of accepting

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ambiguity to enhance leadership capacity. The results of this study have important implications for practice and leadership effectiveness of principals and department chairs since ambiguity influences relationships, task completion, and decision-making. If a principal models these constructs, faculty may be more willing to accept a paradigm shift, improving these areas and increasing work productivity. Specific principles of distributed leadership were identified and analyzed in context, which is beneficial to any administrator trying to implement distributed leadership. Understanding the significance of motivation, self-efficacy, and organizational commitment influence how a principal interacts, makes decisions, and implements transformational and situational leadership. Principals can use this knowledge to build leadership capacity and a positive school culture within their schools, as well as help department chairs accept ambiguity as a necessary adaptive skill.

<u>Direction for Future Research</u>

This research begins to address the apparent gap in literature between the philosophy of distributed leadership and the reality of its actual implementation by identifying specific principles of practice. However, more studies are needed in order to understand how ambiguity can be viewed as an asset in distributed leadership practice. Specifically, studies need to be conducted that examine how self-efficacy and organizational commitment influence the actions, behaviors, and perceptions of department chairs. The correlation between self-efficacy, organizational commitment, and perceptions towards ambiguity need further investigation, as well. The degree to which transformational and situational leadership are imbedded in the implementation of distributed leadership should be explored, as well.

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Since ambiguity was ignored at this site, it would be beneficial to conduct this study in other schools to examine to what degree a paradigm shifts allows principals to maximize the benefits of ambiguity, such as creativity, "thinking outside of the box", intrinsic motivation, work commitment, synergy, adaptability, flexibility, and collaboration in order to effectively complete tasks (Savelsbergh et al., 2012; Weick, 1976).

<u>Conclusion</u>

My research attempted to describe that ambiguity can be leveraged through self-efficacy and organizational commitment. Since research supports that modeling self-efficacy, adaptability, and organizational commitment while offering targeted support improves morale, school culture, and student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 2009; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 004), I suggested that a principal can use these same theoretical constructs to develop a positive school atmosphere and harness ambiguity for more effective distributed leadership.

While I observed many principles of DL in practice and various ambiguous situations, I could not support this viewpoint through my research. Although my interview questions could have been more specific about ambiguity, the bitterness towards the principal's two year absence and the union stance towards job descriptions prevented faculty from addressing ambiguity. Any incidents of ambiguity were ignored or pushed on to administration's lap.

The Garbage Can theory emerged from my study. Collaborative problem-solving and decision-making are organic, messy processes but the ambiguity within these processes promote flexibility, creativity, and out-of-the-box thinking. While this theory

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was not connected to DL in the research, it was prevalent in the implementation of the SL model.

My personal practice is influenced through continual reflection, the understanding of theoretical constructs, and specific principles of practice. I am cognizant of the role that self-efficacy, organizational commitment, and organizational leadership theories play in accepting ambiguity within daily problems, tasks, and interactions. I learned a great deal through the observations and interactions of the principal and the Small Town High School community. Maureen is well respected and supported, and is an effective leader because she is a situational leader who implements various principles of DL. As an effective leader, she knows when to hold power and when to relinquish it, and therefore, does not utilize DL with every decision. The principal cannot do it all but must rely on the DL principle that the principal orchestrates, facilitates, and supports the faculty, much like the Wizard of Oz. Both are behind the scenes masterminding everything that happens in their domain. Any ambiguity that exists is utilized advantageously, manipulating outcomes by specific actions, interactions, and attitudes.

Distributed leadership is a more complex notion of leadership where developing leadership capacity by empowering others is the principal's primary responsibility. The principal ensures that others are afforded leadership opportunities and are provided the necessary supports to make change. However, this process is not a tidy one.

Since school culture and shared leadership are closely intertwined, it is imperative to continuously work to maintain a positive culture and strong relationships with department chairs and all school personnel. If a school has a strong organizational culture, which can foster collaboration and a shared commitment to school goals,

department chairs may be less conflicted about accepting role ambiguity. Understanding the significance of organizational culture is necessary to be maximally effective in distributing leadership.

The basis of my conceptual framework, which focuses on the interplay between people and events, is that in any given situation, interactions between people influence what should, could, and does happen. Since people learn from one another in any situation, these interactions shape perceptions, norms, values, and decisions. Since these interactions stress social relationships and collaboration, understanding and implementing these constructs will enhance the leadership capacity of department chairs and maximize distributed leadership.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEPARTMENT CHAIRS FOUND WITHIN LITERATURE

The following chart is a visual representation of the various roles and responsibilities that department chairs fulfill, which were identified in the literature. Additionally, this chart is aligned with the guiding principles I have identified to serve as the core of my research and the purpose for my research application. Note that role ambiguity remains a constant, even in this detailed list.

Leader	Administrator	Interpersonal Counselor	Resource Developer	Cultivator of Subculture
*Increase student achievement (Gronn, 2002; Spillane & Diamond, 2007)	*Increase student achievement (Gronn, 2002; Spillane & Diamond, 2007)	*Increase student achievement (Gronn, 2002; Spillane & Diamond, 2007)	*Increase student achievement (Gronn, 2002; Spillane & Diamond, 2007)	*Increase student achievement (Gronn, 2002; Spillane & Diamond, 2007)
*Improve school culture (Chance & Lingren, 1988; Mabey, 2003)	*Improve school culture (Chance & Lingren, 1988; Mabey, 2003)	*Improve school culture (Chance & Lingren, 1988; Mabey, 2003)	*Improve school culture (Chance & Lingren, 1988; Mabey, 2003)	*Improve school culture (Chance & Lingren, 1988; Mabey, 2003)
*Correctly interpret social context (Bolman & Deal, 1984)	*Correctly interpret social context (Bolman & Deal, 1984)	*Correctly interpret social context (Bolman & Deal, 1984)	*Correctly interpret social context (Bolman & Deal, 1984)	*Correctly interpret social context (Bolman & Deal, 1984)
Improve teacher quality (Gmelch & Schuh, 2004; Lewis, 1998; Schuh & Kuh, 2005)	Fulfill any responsibilities or requirements relayed from higher authority (Mabey, 2003)	Meet needs of individual department members (Bass, 1990; Blunden, 2011)	Gain access to knowledge	Unite people around shared values and beliefs
Collect and interpret data	Middle managers- respect chain of command (Lambert, 2002)	Establish channels of communication (Bolman & Deal, 1984)	Use granted authority (Hord & Murphy, 1985; Mabey, 2003)	Cultivate sense of community (Contractor & Ehrlich, 1993)
Curriculum and instruction leader (Gmelch & Schuh, 2004; Lewis, 1998; Schuh & Kuh, 2005)	Establish channels of communication	Communicate shared vision/ identity (Bolman & Deal, 1984)	Evaluate teachers (Graham & Benoit, 2004; Sergiovanni, 1984)	Influence daily behavior
Supervision and evaluation of curriculum (Graham & Benoit, 2004)	Follow protocols and formal rules	Be a coach/ mentor (Graham & Benoit, 2004; Spillane et al., 2004)	Recruit faculty (Graham & Benoit, 2004)	Share values to guide department in decision-making
Execute department meetings	Schedule courses and teachers	Negotiate conflicts (Barden, 2009)	Budget resources and distribute	Generate energy (Chow, 2013)

(Graham & Benoit, 2004; Spillane et al., 2004)	(Graham & Benoit, 2004)		resources wisely (Graham & Benoit, 2004)	
Advocate for department members	Supervise staff (Graham & Benoit, 2004)	Solve problems (Barden, 2009; Lucas, 1986)	Achieve goals through collaboration and competition	Build collaboration and responsibility for student learning (Chow, 2013)
Project vision (Gmelch & Miskin, 2010)	Generate reports (Graham & Benoit, 2004)	Regulate climate (Marzano et al., 2005)	Maintain resources to maintain power (Graham & Benoit, 2004)	Empower teachers (Bolman & Deal, 1984)
Collaborate with department (Graham & Benoit, 2004; Spillane et al., 2004)	Implement school goals (Gmelch & Schuh, 2004)	Find solutions (Barden, 2009; Lucas, 1986; Lucas, 2000)	Recruit faculty (Graham & Benoit, 2004)	Increase faculty morale (Bolman & Deal, 1984)
Be a role model/ mentor (Graham & Benoit, 2004; Spillane et al., 2004)	Hold department accountable (Graham & Benoit, 2004)	Help teachers find fulfillment (Graham & Benoit, 2004)	Faculty Development (Graham & Benoit, 2004)	
Establish trust and respect (Woods, Bennett, Harvey & Wise, 2004)	Control climate (Marzano et al., 2005)	Create departmental identity through shared values and culture	Know when to use influence over power and authority (Bonner et al., 2004; Hord & Murphy, 1985)	
Cultivate a sense of community and commitment (Mabey, 2003)	Construct culture that positively influences faculty (Marzano et al., 2005)	Counsel (Graham & Benoit, 2004)		
Collaborate with department (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000)	Report accomplishments and concerns	Mediate (Graham & Benoit, 2004)		
Solicit ideas (Gmelch & Miskin, 2004)	Plan professional development (Graham & Benoit, 2004; Spillane et al., 2004)	Coordinate schedule (Graham & Benoit, 2004)		
Negotiate conflicts (Barden, 2009; Lucas, 2000)	Supervise and evaluate staff (Graham & Benoit, 2004; Sergiovanni, 1984)	Foster collaboration within department (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000)		
Solve problems (Barden, 2009; Lucas, 2000)	Coordinate schedule (Graham & Benoit, 2004; Spillane et al., 2004)	Understand motivating behaviors (Bass, 1990)		
Maintain open communication between department and administration	Establish channels of communication (Treadwell, 1997)	Ingrain trust and values		
Translate ideas into action (Crowther et al., 2002)	Solve problems (Barden, 2009; Lucas, 2000)			

**SOCIAL NORMS ABOUT DEPARTMENT CHAIRS IDENTIFIED IN THE
LITERATURE**

Not only do department chairs have specific responsibilities, there are certain "unwritten
rules and values" which influence their roles in secondary schools:

- Empowerment is promoted through social norms

- Create and maintain positive departmental culture; unite members as a team

- Promote connections between teachers and administration; treated as quasi-administrators and middle manager

- Support the organizational structure of the school; respect the chain of command

- Possess significant content and teaching expertise

- Exemplify a professional image

- Influence processes; influence beliefs and values of departmental members

- Are decisive; confront barriers and problems in the school culture

- Hold the respect and trust of department members, as well as rest of faculty

- Coach and problem solve

- Possess informal authority and positional power over staffing, resourcing and decision-making

- Foster collaboration

- Cultivate a sense of community and commitment by communicating cultural messages about what is important

- Nurture school success and translate ideas into actions

- Tend to articulate positive beliefs towards students

APPENDIX C

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY/ INFORMED CONSENT

(PRINCIPAL)

<div align="right">April 22, 2015</div>

Dear Principal XX:

    My name is Diana Bonneville, and I am a Ph.D. candidate at University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Massachusetts. As part of my dissertation research, I am studying distributed leadership, as well as role ambiguity, which is inherent to the position of department chairs. I will be conducting interviews with the principal and department chairs/ department project leaders, and observing afterschool meetings and interactions within the school. I will also be conducting a document analysis to determine how leadership is distributed, expectations communicated and decisions made. One component of this study is to conduct a confidential, 60 minute interview with a high school principal from Western Massachusetts that I believe effectively facilitates distributed leadership. Another component of this study is to interview department chairs/ departmental project leaders in order to examine their perceptions of how leadership is distributed and the how ambiguity impacts their job performance, relationships and problem solving skills.

    I am seeking your permission to interview you at a time and location that is most convenient for you. The interview will consist of open ended questions that will allow me to explore your perceptions of distributed leadership, ambiguity, self-efficacy, organizational commitment, and empowerment. Interviews will be taped, and all information regarding this study and included in the tape recordings will be stored at a non-public location in a locked filing cabinet or if in electronic form be password protected. Tape recordings of interviews and meetings will be destroyed after transcription.

    I do not anticipate any risks to you since you want to explore these questions with me. I assure that the information I collect, including your identity and that of the school will be treated confidentially. No identifying descriptors of you or your school will be used. No prejudice will be shown, whether or not you agree to participate in the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If at any time you wish to discontinue your participation, you may do so without any penalty. If you would like more information before you decide to grant permission, please email me at bonneville.diana@gmail.com or call me at (413) 358-1052. If at any point during this study you have any questions or concerns that I cannot answer, please contact either Sharon Rallis, Chairperson of Dissertation Committee at sharonr@educ.umass.edu (413-545-1056) or Linda Griffin, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at lgriffin@educ.umass.edu (413-545-6985). If you feel you need no further information, please complete the information below indicating your decision to allow me to schedule an interview for the purpose of completing this research. The form may be scanned and emailed to bonneville.diana@gmail.com or sent to Diana Bonneville 226 Hopkins Lane Becket, MA 01223. I will provide you with a copy of this letter and retain the original for my files. Once I have received your approval, I will coordinate a visit date and location that are convenient for you. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

Diana Bonneville

    ○   I give my permission for Diana Bonneville to interview me for purposes associated with a doctoral study approved by the University of Massachusetts College Review Board.

_____   _____

    (participant signature)   (date)

_____   _____

    (witness signature)   (date)

APPENDIX D

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY/ INFORMED CONSENT
(DEPARTMENT PROJECT LEADERS)

March 2015

Dear   ,

   My name is Diana Bonneville, and I am a Ph.D. candidate at University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Massachusetts. As part of my dissertation research, I am studying distributed leadership, as well as role ambiguity, which is inherent to the position of department chairs. I will be conducting interviews with the principal and department chairs/ department project leaders, and observing afterschool meetings and interactions within the school. I will also be conducting a document analysis to determine how leadership is distributed, expectations communicated and decisions made. One component of this study is to conduct confidential 30 minute interviews with department project leaders to learn your perceptions about distributed leadership and if ambiguity plays a role in how you make decisions, relate with department members and perform tasks. Another component of this study is to interview your principal to gauge her perceptions, as well.

   I am seeking your permission to interview you at a time and location that is most convenient for you. The interview will consist of open ended questions that will allow me to explore your perceptions of distributed leadership, ambiguity, self-efficacy, organizational commitment, and empowerment. Interviews will be taped, and all information regarding this study and included in the tape recordings will be stored at a non-public location in a locked filing cabinet or if in electronic form be password protected. Tape recordings of interviews and meetings will be destroyed after transcription.

   I do not anticipate any risks to you since you want to explore these questions with me. I assure that the information I collect, including your identity and that of the school will be treated confidentially. No identifying descriptors of you or your school will be used. No prejudice will be shown, whether or not you agree to participate in the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If at any time you wish to discontinue your participation, you may do so without any penalty. If you would like more information before you decide to grant permission, please email me at bonneville.diana@gmail.com or call me at (413) 358-1052. If at any point during this study you have any questions or concerns that I cannot answer, please contact either Sharon Rallis, Chairperson of Dissertation Committee at sharonr@educ.umass.edu (413-545-1056) or Linda Griffin, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at lgriffin@educ.umass.edu (413-545-6985). If you feel you need no further information, please complete the information below indicating your decision to allow me to schedule an interview for the purpose of completing this research. The form may be scanned and emailed to bonneville.diana@gmail.com or sent to Diana Bonneville 226 Hopkins Lane Becket, MA 01223. I will provide you with a copy of this letter and retain the original for my files. Once I have received your approval, I will coordinate a visit date and location that are convenient for you. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

Diana Bonneville
_____

   ○   I give my permission for Diana Bonneville to interview me for purposes associated with a doctoral study
       approved by the University of Massachusetts College Review Board.

_____   _____
(participant signature)   (date)

_____   _____
(witness signature)   (date)

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APPENDIX E

CONFIRMATION EMAIL

Dear (Principal name),

Please allow this email to confirm that I will be interviewing you on _____ at _____. I will be meeting you in the main office at your school. I look forward to meeting with you and learning more about your distributed leadership style.

Sincerely,

Diana Bonneville
University of Massachusetts

APPENDIX F

HUMAN RESEARCH CURRICULUM COMPLETION REPORT

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI)
HUMAN RESEARCH CURRICULUM COMPLETION REPORT
Printed on 05/07/2014

LEARNER	Diana Bonneville (ID: 2022221) 226 Hopkins lane Becket MA 01223
DEPARTMENT	Education
PHONE	413-584-1106
EMAIL	dbonneville@hadleyschools.org
INSTITUTION	University of Massachusetts Amherst
EXPIRATION DATE	12/03/2015

GROUP 2 SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH INVESTIGATORS AND KEY PERSONNEL

COURSE/STAGE:	Basic Course/1
PASSED ON:	12/03/2010
REFERENCE ID:	5309122

REQUIRED MODULES	DATE COMPLETED
Introduction	12/02/10
History and Ethical Principles - SBE	12/02/10
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE	12/02/10
The Regulations - SBE	12/03/10
Assessing Risk - SBE	12/03/10
Informed Consent - SBE	12/03/10
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE	12/03/10
Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects	12/03/10
University of Massachusetts Amherst	12/03/10

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI Program participating institution or be a paid Independent Learner. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI Progam course site is unethical, and may be considered research misconduct by your institution.

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Program Course Coordinator

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS REPORT*

* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- **Name:** Diana Bonneville (ID: 2022221)
- **Email:** dbonneville@shschools.com
- **Institution Affiliation:** University of Massachusetts Amherst (ID: 500)
- **Institution Unit:** Education
- **Phone:** 413-538-5063

- **Curriculum Group:** Human Research
- **Course Learner Group:** Group 2 Social and Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel
- **Stage:** Stage 2 - Refresher Course

- **Report ID:** 17151730
- **Completion Date:** 12/24/2015
- **Expiration Date:** 12/22/2020
- **Minimum Passing:** 80
- **Reported Score*:** 100

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY	DATE COMPLETED
SBE Refresher 1 – History and Ethical Principles (ID: 936)	12/24/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Federal Regulations for Protecting Research Subjects (ID: 937)	12/24/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Informed Consent (ID: 938)	12/24/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Research with Prisoners (ID: 939)	12/24/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Research in Educational Settings (ID: 940)	12/24/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Instructions (ID: 943)	12/24/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Defining Research with Human Subjects (ID: 15029)	12/24/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Privacy and Confidentiality (ID: 15035)	12/24/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Assessing Risk (ID: 15034)	12/24/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Research with Children (ID: 15036)	12/24/15
SBE Refresher 1 – International Research (ID: 15028)	12/24/15

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

CITI Program
Email: citisupport@miami.edu
Phone: 305-243-7970
Web: https://www.citiprogram.org

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview with me today.

In this study, I am attempting to understand a principal's perceptions towards role ambiguity inherent in the position of the department chair, and how ambiguity influences task completion. I am also interested in learning if as a principal you perceive self-efficacy, organizational commitment and motivation as effective tools for harnessing role ambiguity.

Please answer honestly and candidly since the value of the interview resides entirely within your responses. Your responses and insights will remain confidential and will be used for the sole purpose of this study. No names or identifying information will ever be revealed in reports produced from your responses.

I will be taking notes during the interview process to help me collect your exact responses and allow for reflection. I will ask you to sign the Informed Consent Form before we begin this interview.

Personal Information:

Age_____   Age you became a high school principal_____

Years of experience prior to becoming a high school principal_____

Years of experience as a high school principal_____

Highest level of education completed:_____

Leadership Style Questions:
1. Could you tell me why you entered the field of education?

2. Could you tell me why you decided to become a high school principal?

3. Why do you think you are successful as a principal? Tell me about the last time you had a success.

4. Were you ever a department chair? How does this response influence your practice?

5. What type of leader do you think you are? Please explain.

6. What do you think your best leadership qualities are?

7. What do you think your weaknesses are in terms of leadership?

8. With so many responsibilities and deadlines, how do you get all of the work done? How do you determine what needs to be accomplished when and how?

9. How are decisions made within your school (policy, programming, daily operations, budget)?

10. Do you ever play with our manipulate goals?

11. How do you develop administrative leadership team meeting agendas and faculty meeting agendas?

12. Why do you think some department chairs are more confident in their roles than other department chairs?

13. How do you define self-efficacy and model it for department chairs?

14. How do you define organizational commitment and model it for department chairs?

Questions Specific to Department Chairs:

15. How many department chairs do you have and in what departments?

16. Is there a written job description? Who wrote it? Did department chairs help to develop it?

17. Why do people want to be department chairs in this school? What is the compensation for department chairs (stipend, release time)? Do department chairs view this as motivation?

18. What are the communicated expectations of the position?

19. What are the uncommunicated expectations and how are they implied?

20. What are department chairs' perceptions of the demands, challenges and constraints placed on department chairs? Are your perceptions different?

21. When do you give flexibility to department chairs and when don't you?

22. How would you describe the attributes of a successful department chair?

23. How do you motivate department chairs to complete tasks?

24. How do you expect department chairs to tackle challenging problems- with step by step direction and guidance or flexibility? How much autonomy do you allow?

25. How are department chairs empowered in their roles? What empowering strategies are implemented in an effort to harness role ambiguity for department chairs?

26. What is your perception of how self-efficacy and organizational commitment influence department chairs' ability to complete tasks?

27. Can you tell me how you notice different departments having different subcultures? How do those develop?

28. From your perspective, could you describe the barriers department chairs experience at the following times and how you provide support/ empowerment?
    a. Running department meetings

    b. Sharing in the decision- making process

    c. Completing regular administrative tasks

    d. Completing tasks which are unclear (DDMs, evaluations)

    e. Resolving departmental conflicts

29. Provide examples of when you encourage department chairs to think outside of the box and be creative.

30. Provide examples of how you empower department chairs to problem solve.

31. The following guiding principles evolved from my research. Please comment on the following statements:
    a. The operations of a school are increasingly ambiguous and paradoxical; the role of the department chair should be similarly ambiguous and paradoxical.

b. Principals need to model self-efficacy.

c. Departments should be nurtured as subcultures with their own histories and identities in order to cultivate a sense of community and commitment.

d. Principals must inspire, motivate, and challenge department chairs by meeting the needs of the group collectively and individually, as well as focus on maintaining health relationships with everyone.

e. Treat each department chair as an individual.

f. Just as a principal must "swivel" among department chairs, teach department chairs to swivel between audiences, portraying the same message but using different approaches and tones.

APPENDIX H

GENERAL SELF-EFFICACY SCALE (GSE) AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT SCALE (OCS) SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to gauge the collective group's level of self-efficacy and organizational commitment. This is completely voluntary and you can choose to leave questions blank. Please answer this survey as honestly as possible. All responses will be kept confidential.

1= not true at all   2= Hardly true   3= Moderately true   4= Exactly

1. _____ I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.

2. _____ If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I   want.

3. _____It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.

4. _____ I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.

5. _____Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.

6. _____ I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.

7. _____ I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.

8. _____ When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.

9. _____ If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.

10. _____ I can usually handle whatever comes my way.

These statements measure organizational commitment (OCQ):

11. _____ I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond what is expected in order to help this school and its students be successful.

12. _____I talk up this school to my family and friends as a great school to work in.

13. _____ I feel very little loyalty to this school.

14. _____It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this school.

15. _____ This school really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.

16. _____There's not too much to be gained by sticking with this school indefinitely.

17. _____ For me, this is the best of all possible schools to work in.

SITE VISIT SCHEDULE

April 22, 2015	1-3 pm	Interview with principal
April 27, 2015	3-4 pm	Full faculty meeting
April 30, 2015	2-2:45 pm	Department project leaders meetings/ Interviews
May 4, 2015	3-4 pm	Faculty meeting- shared leadership groups
May 4, 2015	4-4:50 pm	Interview with student management project leader
May 13, 2015	2-2:45 pm	Department project leaders meeting/ interviews
May 15, 2015	12:15-3 pm	Half day in-service (shared leadership groups)
May 18, 2015	12:30-1:30	Interview with student support project leader
May 18, 2015	3-4 pm	Faculty meeting- shared leadership groups
May 20, 2015	11-11:40 am	Interview with academic affairs project leader
May 20, 2015	11:40-12:10	Interview with veteran teacher
May 20, 2015	12:15-1:00	Interview with assistant principal
May 28, 2015	2:45-3:20	Interview with data project leader
June 1, 2015	3-4 pm	Full faculty meeting (hear proposals)
June 10, 2015	7:45-9:40	Observe principal
June 10, 2015	1-1:45 pm	Interview with communications project leader
June 10, 2015	2- 2:45 pm	Department project leaders meeting
June 15, 2015	3-4 pm	Full faculty meeting (vote on presentations)
June 22, 2015	11-12 pm	Full faculty meeting (vote on presentations)

13 visitation days = 20 observations and interviews

APPENDIX J

TRANSCRIPTION CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I,_____, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full and complete confidentiality in regards to any and all audio recordings and documentation received from Diana Bonneville related to her dissertation study on principals' perceptions towards role ambiguity. Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in the strictest of confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed or mentioned during the transcription of recorded interviews or in any related documents;

2. To not duplicate any recordings or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts unless explicitly, in writing, requested to do so by Diana Bonneville;

3. To store all study-related material, including recordings, in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;

4. To return all recordings and study-related materials to Diana Bonneville in a complete and timely manner;

5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement as well as for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the recordings and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber's Name (please print):_____

Transcriber's Signature: _____

Date:_____

APPENDIX K

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP CODES

What evidence exists that the principal uses distributed leadership? What does distributed leadership look like in this setting and how is it perceived?

1. **Importance of Relationships:**
   a. Leadership is a social, collective process emerging through social interactions/ group activity

   b. Network of interacting individuals

   c. Social interactions strengthen or diminish leadership capacity

   d. Conflict resolution

2. **Importance of social context:**
   a. Interactions between people should, could and does happen in any given situation

   b. Link leadership and learning

3. **Principal as participative leader:**
   a. Deliberately sets out to deal with increased pressures and demands on the school by requiring a more responsive approach

   b. Leadership is orchestrated, supported and facilitated

   c. Principal's support is critical

4. **School structure:**
   a. Role of principal still important/ formal leadership structure/ chain of command

   b. Everyone does not lead simultaneously; authority and influence go up as you climb ladder

   c. Collective responsibility is stress over top down hierarchy
   d. Focus on respect not regulations
   e. No "bossless teams"; boundary issues

   f. Goal orientation/ role of department chair/ bureaucracy

5. **Collaborative decision making process:**
   a. Sharing responsibilities

   b. Deep commitment to collective action for whole-school success

   c. Need for strong consensus

6. **Sharing leadership responsibilities**/ and accountability
   a. Improves instruction/ student achievement/ beneficial school outcomes

   b. Openness of boundaries of leadership

   c. Collaboration

   d. Sharing tasks

   e. Collective responsibility

7. **Leadership is fluid and emergent**

8. Leader Plus:
   a. Not clearly defined division of labor/ sharing of tasks

   b. Collaborative network of varied expertise and skills/ leader plus

   c. Varieties of expertise are distributed across the many, not the few

9. Division of Labor:
   a. Utilizes organizational chart with designated responsibilities

   b. Collaborated/ coordinated/ collective distribution of labor

10. Autonomy: self-management

11. School Culture:
   a. Improves school culture/ ties in with leadership

   b. Development of common culture that functions positively and effectively

   c. Create a common culture of expectations/ morale

   d. The way we do things around here

   e. Unites people around shared values and beliefs about what works and doesn't work, which influences daily behaviors and shapes school's identity

11B. Collaboration: Successful collaborative cultures embody trust, accountability, joint problem-solving, honest feedback and professional learning

12. Collaborative process of problem solving

13. Authority/ Influence/ Power: dependent on situational context
   a. sharing power

   b. empowerment (enablement)/ resolve own conflicts when empowered

   c. referent power: derived from personal characteristics, respect and admiration

   d. expert power; pride in expertise

   e. positional power (power of scheduling, budgeting)

   f. cooperation and competition/ resolve own conflicts

   g. Influencing without formal authority

   h. Improves employee performance

   i. Leadership equates with influence

14. Collaborative effort in reaching shared goals:
   a. Accountability

   b. Improves instruction/ student achievement/ beneficial school outcomes

   c. Individual behavior influences the whole

15. Actors, artifacts and the situation have **interconnectedness of purpose**

15B. Being **purposeful** in sharing resp. and decision-making

16. BENEFITS:

   a. Teacher motivation
   b. Morale increases
   c. Increased work commitment
   d. Status/ prestige

e.   Access to administration
f.   Advance dept. program in school

17. Thinking outside of the box:
a.   Principal encourages creativity

18. Roles:
a.   Roles and responsibilities are not always clearly defined

b.   People are willing to accept roles because they provide important psychological benefits, such as increased self-esteem, status and ego gratification

19. Self-efficacy (benefit of DL)
a.   Increased self-determination
b.   Time management skills

20. Organizational Commitment
a.   People want to do their best/ want to be active in school
b.   Loyalty; exerts effort on behalf of school
c.   Emotional attachment

21. Building leadership capacity
a.   Create and maintain culture
b.   Facilitate learning experiences
c.   Ensure interrelationships/ synergy
22. Connecting DL to school performance and student achievement
23. Job satisfaction
24. Shared accountability
25. Motivation/ self-actualization
a.   Potential for growth
b.   Reaching fullest potential

26. AMBIGUITY WITHIN DL:
a.   Multiple levels of involvement
b.   Vertical and lateral leadership structures are linked
c.   Leadership is fluid and interchangeable
d.   Improved leadership practice is primary goal
e.   What's a self-managed team? Still need leader
f.   Connection to school improvements and student achievement- how can you tell it's due to DL?
g.   How can you measure improved communication?

APPENDIX L

AMBIGUITY CODES

What is the role of ambiguity in the functioning of DL?
Where are incidents of ambiguity within interactions and how do both parties interpret those moments?

1. **Interchangeable terms**
   a. Collaborative, shared, democratic, participatory
2. **Multiple levels of involvement in decision-making**
3. **Primary goal is improved leadership practice**
4. **Everyone is a leader**
   a. Everyone has input
5. **DL is only about collaborative situations**
6. **Since leadership= influence, then all leadership is inevitably distributed to some degree**
7. **Competing agendas and conflicting priorities**
8. **Boundary management issues arise**
   a. Competing leadership styles
9. **Schools and mandates are complex**
10. **Examples of flexibility and choice**
11. **Vague job description and expectations**
12. **Stress and impeded work production**
13. **No clear expectation on how to build a school culture**
14. **DC challenges**
    a. Time
    b. Conflict
    c. Stress
15. **Continuously redefined school leadership**
16. **Vague goals**
    a. SIP
17. **Inadequate resources/ uneven distribution**
18. **Outcomes of ambiguity:**
    a. Job dissatisfaction
    b. Loss of self esteem
    c. Early departure
    d. Things left undone
19. **Misinterpretations**
20. **Increased creativity**
21. **Leadership activities do not have complete transparency**
22. **Managing change effectively**
    a. Visionary and inspirational
    b. Think long term
23. **DC follow path they deem most appropriate**

24. **Confidence to try new things**
    a. Able to adapt
25. **Varied perceptions of power and context**
26. **Importance of role theory**
    a. Influences leadership style and behavior
27. **Time management issues**
28. **Different values**
29. **Doubt capabilities**
30. **Vague communication**

APPENDIX M

SCHOOL CULTURE CODES

How does the school culture influence the shared leadership model?

- **Maureen's leadership style**
  - Focus on collaboration
  - Situational leadership
  - Transformational leadership
  - Improves school culture/ ties in with leadership
  - Development of common culture that functions positively and effectively
  - Create a common culture of expectations/ morale
  - The way we do things around here

- **Ownership of problems**
  - Empowerment/ All involved
  - Influence

- **Shared decision making**
  - Express themselves
  - Strong consensus
  - Staff input before big decisions

- **Collaboration**
  - Strengthens relationships
  - trust, accountability, joint problem solving, honest feedback and professional learning
  - Social constructivism
  - With shared goals= leadership capacity= SL

- **Organizational Commitment**
  - Leadership style/ Characteristics- loyalty, extra mile

- **Spartan Way**
  - Cultural messages about what is important
  - 27% faculty/ Morale
  - Unites people around shared values and beliefs about what works and doesn't work, which influences daily behaviors and shapes school's identity

- **Norms**

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