Leading Together: A Descriptive Case Study Exploring the Sensemaking of Teacher Leaders within Their Roles in A Distributed Model of Leadership

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Abstract

Distributed leadership is being implemented in many international schools. However, it is unclear how teacher leaders are experiencing interactions with their colleagues within this model of leadership. The purpose of this descriptive case study was to understand how teacher leaders describe their experiences interacting with their colleagues within a distributed model of leadership in the context of an international school. This study also examined how teacher leaders describe their relationships with colleagues. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with six teacher leaders in an international school in Colombia. Weick’s theory of sensemaking was used as a lens for understanding the experiences of these teacher leaders. Spillane’s theory of distributed leadership provided a contextual perspective of the environment where the interactions were taking place. The study found that teacher leaders adapt their approaches in the midst of an interaction based on the reactions of their colleagues. It was also found that teacher leaders regularly reflect on the best strategies for interacting with distinct personality types. Teacher leaders described their relationships with colleagues as partners in learning, expressing how the blend of personal and professional interactions leads to an environment of trust where they can share experiences and learn together. This study provides suggestions for improving the capacity of teacher leaders through role onboarding processes, ongoing support meetings, and preparation for managing challenging interactions.

*Keywords*: distributed leadership, sensemaking, teacher leadership, international school, teacher relationships
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife and two daughters:

Erin Leigh, Madeline Kate, and Amelie Claire

To my parents:

Mike and Nancy Glab

And to my grandparents:

Leonard and Rose Hartung and Jack and Kay Glab
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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Statement of the Problem

Similar to U.S. private schools, private international schools do not have a district office, leaving major curriculum and instruction decisions to be made by the principal. To successfully manage this workload, many principals of international schools utilize a distributed leadership model that entrusts teachers with important aspects of leadership. As this leadership model increases in popularity, it is essential to understand how teacher leaders describe their interactions with colleagues within a distributed leadership model in order to effectively support them.

Context statement. Colegio Jorge Washington is a private, non-profit, non-denominational, co-educational, N-12, international, college-preparatory school offering American and Colombian diplomas, accredited by AdvancED and the Colombian Ministry of Education. The school was founded in 1952 in Cartagena, Colombia. It is one of two official U.S. State Department overseas schools in Colombia. Current school-wide enrollment at the time this study was conducted was 800 students representing an array of nationalities.

At the time of this study, the school had experienced an increase in responsibilities and pressures for curriculum development, resource management, and professional development. The lack of a central office and its personnel to handle these types of responsibilities was one reason the school administration found it challenging to keep up with these demands. In response to these challenges, the leadership model was being restructured to include distributed leadership.

As part of the distributed model of leadership, lead teachers were formally assigned for each of the following subject areas: English Language Arts, Spanish Language Arts/ Colombian
Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, USA Social Studies, Fine Arts, Assessment, and Standards-based Grading. It was uncertain, however, how the teachers fulfilling leadership roles described their experiences interacting with colleagues. In order to truly understand their interactions, this researcher considered it necessary to closely study the sensemaking and perceptions of these teacher leaders.

The relationships between teachers in the context of an international school are unique due to the distinct set of circumstances surrounding them. Teachers are recruited from job fairs in the United States or through virtual interviews. Each year, a new cohort of teachers arrives the same week in late July. Returning foreign teachers support the incoming teachers as they settle into their new lives overseas. A strong bond is formed among foreign teachers as they navigate the local culture together.

The relationships between teachers in an international school extend beyond their time on campus. They hangout on weekends, workout together, travel together, and party together. Some of them are even roommates. Since most teachers are alone overseas, living far away from their families and friends, they also become a support network for one another. They share in hardships and joys.

The intimate relationship between teachers in international schools is important to understand given that it shapes the findings in this study. The depth of personal connections impacts the way in which individuals interact. Teachers are greatly invested in their personal connections and may not want to strain those relationships for the sake of a challenging professional interaction.

The concept of seniority is also different in the context of an international school. Many teachers only stay two or three years before moving to another location or returning home again.
A teacher who has been on staff for four or five years is considered a “veteran” and is referred to as being there “a long time.” At the school that was the focus of this study, there were not any teachers who had been employed for 20 or more years and who might have been resistant to new ideas. Such a high turnover of teaching faculty often impacts the interactions between teachers.

The administrative leadership at the school examined in this study was seeking to understand how teacher leaders described their experiences interacting with colleagues. The intention of this dissertation was to have the results of the study used in a practical manner to give further consideration to the role of teachers and to possibly to make adjustments in the support provided to teacher leaders when implementing distributed leadership. The primary goal of this dissertation was to provide better support for teacher leaders in their roles within the context of distributed leadership at Colegio Jorge Washington.

**Justification for the research problem.** There is a need for additional research examining distributed leadership. Much of the previous research on distributed leadership has been descriptive in nature. Several definitions have been employed to describe what distributed leadership is and what it is not. This research study utilized a framework of distributed leadership specific for schools, which is discussed in the succeeding text.

To facilitate research on school leadership, Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004), developed a new framework specific to schools. The framework is based upon the distributed model, asserting that school leadership is the interaction between leaders, followers, and the situation (Spillane et al., 2004). This framework emphasizes that the interaction between leader and follower is at the heart of school leadership.

As Kelley (1998) asserted, “Organizations stand or fall partly on the basis of how well their leaders lead, but partly also on the basis of how well their followers follow” (p. 142).
Despite this emphasis on interactions, very little research exists that directly studies the relationship between teacher leaders and their followers.

**Deficiencies in the evidence.** Limited research exists regarding how teacher leaders describe their interactions with colleagues in a distributed model of leadership. It is important to conduct studies to better understand the patterns of these interactions and the benefits and challenges that accompany them. As more schools begin adopting distributed models of leadership, it is critical to understand how teacher leaders describe their interactions with colleagues. Bligh (2011) suggested that further research ought to expand on situational and contextual influences within distributed leadership structures. The study of the description of the interactions between teacher leaders and colleagues is an emerging topic that requires further research.

**Significance of the Research Question**

Distributed leadership is being implemented in many international schools. Although much research has been conducted on the theoretical components of distributed leadership, very little research has been conducted on the practical implications of this leadership model. There are research deficiencies on how teacher leaders describe their interactions with colleagues.

This study is important because the leadership model in place at a school has a “trickle-down” effect on students and their success. Distributed leadership has shown to increase task satisfaction for team members (Serban & Roberts, 2016). In addition, this improved teacher task satisfaction can impact teachers’ classroom performance, which in turn impacts student interactions (Waters, 2003). In order to achieve the maximum benefits of teacher involvement, I need to correct yeah et al. (2004) advised school leaders to find the right balance so teachers “feel neither deprived nor saturated with opportunities for decisional participation” (p. 53).
For these reasons, many stakeholders would be interested in understanding how to best structure support for teacher leadership based on how teacher leaders describe their interactions with colleagues. Parents, school administrators, board members, and teachers would all benefit from understanding the application of distributed leadership in the context of a school to make better-informed decisions about how to support teacher leaders. As more international schools begin adopting a distributed model of leadership, it is critical to understand how teacher leaders describe interactions with their colleagues.

**Research Problem**

Teacher leaders in a distributed model of leadership interact with their colleagues on an ongoing basis. It is unclear how teacher leaders describe their experiences interacting with their colleagues. If school principals understood more in depth how teacher leaders describe their interactions with colleagues within a distributed leadership model, then they might provide better support for them. Therefore, the purpose of this descriptive case study was to understand how teacher leaders described their experiences interacting with their colleagues to provide better support within a distributed leadership model in the context of an international school.

**Research Question**

**Central question.** How do teacher leaders make sense of their interactions with colleagues in a distributed model of leadership within the context of a distributed leadership model in an international school?

**Sub-question.** How do teacher leaders describe their relationships with colleagues as they make sense of their interactions within the context of a distributed leadership model in an international school?

**Definitions of Key Terminology**
**Colleagues.** In this study, colleagues refer to other homeroom teachers in the school who are working alongside the teacher leaders.

**Distributed leadership.** A model of leadership that views leadership as a situated and social process at the intersection of leaders, followers, and the situation (context).

**Descriptive case study.** An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2009).

**Interactions.** Instances when two teachers engage in written or oral communication with one another.

**International school.** In this study, international school refers to a school located overseas offering a U.S. diploma upon graduation.

**Sensemaking.** To “make sense” of an experience. A cognitive activity for individuals to frame situations retrospectively based on past information or experiences (Weick, 1995).

**Social activity.** Social activity usually refers to interactions with colleagues, but it can also be used to reference interactions with the organizational culture, such as policies, procedures, and traditions (Mills, Thurlow, & Mills 2010).

**Teacher leader.** Spillane (2004) defined teacher leaders using the term “leader-plus,” which states that leaders may be individuals in formally designated positions or they may assume certain leadership responsibilities without a formal title (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004).

**Theoretical Framework**

Weick’s (1995) organizational sensemaking model is grounded in social psychology. As Weick (1995) observed:
To talk about sensemaking is to talk about reality as an ongoing accomplishment that
takes form when people make retrospective sense of the situations in which they find
themselves and their creations. There is a strong reflexive quality to this process. People
make sense of things by seeing a world in which they already imposed what they believe.
In other words, people discover their own inventions. (p. 15)

Sensemaking is often used to as a tool to simplify a more complex set of variables in a study.
Participants follow the process of sensemaking in order to clearly understand the intricate
circumstances around them. Therefore, a large amount of information can be more easily
processed and evaluated by the researcher when put into a framework of sensemaking that is
easier to understand (Weick, 1995).

Each individual within an organization has their own unique viewpoint. Each
employee’s experiences and positionality shape their interpretations of any given situation.
Sensemaking acknowledges that there is no universally correct interpretation within an
organization and that all interpretations are plausible (Weick, 1995). In addition, those
interpretations are constantly changing. Sensemaking recognizes this and provides the
researcher with the capability of capturing the ongoing changes within the organizational
landscape (Weick, 1995).

Weick (1995) provided seven properties for sensemaking: (a) identity construction; (b)
retrospection; (c) enactment of sensible environments; (d) social activity; (e) ongoing; (f)
extracted cues; and (g) plausibility over accuracy. Each of these seven properties interacts to
construct meaning. These properties form the basis for this research and are referenced
throughout the study. Weick’s (1995) theory of sensemaking was used as a lens for viewing the
experiences of teacher leaders interacting with their colleagues within a distributed model of leadership. More detailed information regarding sensemaking is provided in Chapter 2.

**Rationale.** By selecting Weick’s sensemaking as the theoretical framework for this study the researcher was able to focus on the sensemaking of teacher leaders as they told the stories of their experiences interacting with colleagues within a distributed model of leadership. By orally sharing experiences, the teachers who participated in this study were able to make sense of the ongoing interactions with colleagues within the context of an international school in Colombia (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005).

**Conclusion**

Weick’s (1995) theory of sensemaking provided the researcher with a simplified lens for understanding how teacher leaders described their interactions with their colleagues within a distributed model of leadership in the context of an international school. A variety of stakeholders can benefit from gaining an understanding of how these teacher leaders made sense of their experiences. This study aimed to fill a gap in the research literature regarding how to support teacher leaders within the context of a distributed leadership model.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature. As part of this review, an overview of school leadership and teacher leadership is provided. Weick’s (1995) theory of sensemaking is also discussed in further detail, and more in-depth information regarding distributed leadership is delivered.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This review of the literature provides a foundation for this study on how teacher leaders describe their experiences interacting with their colleagues in a distributed model of leadership. Due to the unique context of Colegio Jorge Washington and the additional responsibilities placed upon the building principal, the school has implemented a distributed model of leadership involving teachers in leadership roles. At the time this study was designed, it was unclear how teacher leaders described their experiences interacting with their colleagues in this leadership model. The researcher perceived that, if school principals learned how teacher leaders describe their experiences interacting with colleagues within a distributed leadership model, then they might provide better support for teacher leaders. Therefore, the purpose of this descriptive case study was to understand how teacher leaders described their experiences interacting with their colleagues to provide better support for them within a distributed leadership model in the context of an international school.

The first strand of this literature review provides an overview of the evolving models of leadership and the reasons for adopting distributed leadership in the context of an international school located in Colombia. Next, a brief history of distributed leadership is offered, including the potential benefits and challenges faced by teachers during implementation of a distributed model of leadership. The following strand describes the common roles held by teacher leaders and how their experiences may be mixed with successes and obstacles. The final strand focuses on sensemaking as a lens for analyzing the experiences of participants. The following literature was carefully selected to provide a sound basis for a valid study on this topic.

School Leadership to Fit the Context
Leadership models have evolved over the last half century. The context of the organization can be a factor in deciding what leadership model should be put into practice (Surie & Hazy, 2006). School leaders in particular have a unique context that requires a special set of systems to be successful. Relationships in organizations, and especially in schools, must be given high priority when considering a leadership model. This strand provides an overview of school leadership models, explores the importance of context in selecting a leadership model, and identifies the importance of relationships in leadership.

Overview of Leadership Research

Over the past half century, many studies have been conducted around the topic of effective leadership models in organizations. Due to the varying contexts and organizational dynamics, there is no final determination as to the best overall leadership style. There are, however, indicators that point towards certain behaviors that are correlated with effective leadership. Among these studies, it becomes increasingly evident that the organizational situation and leader-follower relationships are critical factors in determining the effectiveness of any given leader.

Yukl, Gordon, & Taber (2002) developed a Hierarchical Taxonomy of Leader Behavior to best summarize the seminal studies on leadership. Each of the behaviors described in this publication are able to be directly observed and are grounded in prior theory and research on effective leadership. The behaviors can be applied regardless of the leadership model in place in a given organization.

The taxonomy is divided into three categories: task behavior, relations behavior, and change behavior. Task behavior includes the leader’s ability to plan short-term activities, clarify objectives, and monitor performance. Relations behavior consists of providing support,
recognition, developing confidence, shared-decision making, and empowering employees. Change behavior refers to the leader’s ability to monitor the environment, propose innovation, and take risks. Although these behaviors can potentially be applied to effective leadership in general, the results of the study show that even a meta-analysis of this type is not equally relevant to each context and situation (Yukl et al., 2002). This analysis shows that the most effective leaders must be able to adapt their behaviors to fit the organization.

Maurik (2001) provided another overview of leadership that spans 80 years of research. He broke the theories down into four generations: trait theories, behavioral theories, contingency theories, and transformational theories. The evolution begins with trait theory by describing the traits that are correlated with effective leaders. The next generation was behavioral theories, which focused on the behaviors that are displayed by the leaders. Next, contingency theories centered around three factors: relationships, structure of tasks, and position power. The most recent generation involved transformational theories, which perceived the leader as a change agent who raises the level of awareness among followers and encourages them to place the interest of the team before their own interests (Maurik, 2001). This study provided evidence that the dynamic relationship and the importance of the interaction between the leader and follower has become increasingly important as leadership theories have advanced over time.

Leadership in context. Each organization has its unique context. “Contexts contain cultures that represent a shared system of rituals and significance that give meaning and power to an individual’s role” (Kezar & Lester, 2010, p. 168). All of the circumstances and conditions surrounding an individual make up the context. This includes the influences at varying levels from the country, local community, organization, department, and so on. Each context provides a unique set of variables that a leader must analyze in order to select the most effective approach
to leadership. The context of the organization has an undeniable impact on the role of the leader and the behaviors necessary to be effective.

Many of the early theories on leadership overlooked the fact that the context of an organization can drastically alter roles. In recent years, however, models of leadership have begun to consider context as an important element of leadership (Surie & Hazy, 2006). Schwandt & Szabla (2007) closely examined this evolution of leadership and its relationship to systems thinking. They pointed out that theory on leadership has evolved to embrace a much more complex and inclusive understanding regarding the influences upon a system. Many refer to this as an open system. One of the greatest errors of modern organizations is their “failure to recognize fully the dependence of organizations on inputs from the environment” (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p. 30-31). The employees, the organizational structure, the economy, and the community demographics all make up part of inputs that flow into the context of an organization. Even the same organization can undergo a big shift in its environment over time. Within these changing contexts, a leadership model that is one-size-fits-all does not exist.

At Colegio Jorge Washington, located in Cartagena, Colombia, the context of the organization is quite unique. As a private N-12 school overseas, there is not a district office that makes major decisions for the school. All of the responsibilities usually managed by a central office in a U.S. school district fall upon the shoulders of the leaders in the school. There is a small central office taking care of accounting, purchasing, and human resources. But the principal is ultimately responsible for all educational operations in the school. This inevitably puts a lot of additional stress on principals. This study focused on how the leadership model of the school worked within this specific context.
The people of Cartagena are very social, interactive, and place a large focus on relationships. A parent meeting with “Cartageneros” sounds more like a stadium full of fans chatting. In the work environment, before you approach someone at his or her desk for a question, it is first necessary to make a bit of small talk before getting down to business. This typically consists of asking about family, health, or the weekend. The emphasis on relationships requires a leadership model that works well within this context.

**Relationships and leadership.** Relationships are the foundation of successful leadership in any school. Leaders that would like to see change within a school must do so by connecting with others, one relationship at a time (Beatty, 2007). Leadership that is focused on school renewal must learn to see “the objective being not a well-oiled machine, but a webbed network of living resilient relationships that can continue to grow and renew each other each day” (Beatty, 2007, p. 338). Within the context of Cartagena, this is especially true. Relationships must be a central aspect of the leadership model at Colegio Jorge Washington.

Schwandt & Szabla (2007) recognized the importance of relationships within leadership. They encouraged those studying and practicing leadership to “broaden our perspectives to include a more distributed concept of human interactions” (p. 59). With one single leader in place, the amount of interactions taking place is limited. The leader is unable to fulfill the relational needs of an entire faculty. In contrast, a distributed model of leadership is seen to bring colleagues together and promote positive relationships (Ensley, Pearson, & Pearce, 2003). Within a distributed model, the interactions between team members and leaders increase.

**Conclusion of leadership models.** This strand has provided an overview of the evolution of leadership models over the past half century. As researchers and theorists have begun to understand leadership better, they have recognized the crucial role that the context of the
organization plays in selecting the most effective model of leadership for any given organization. In the context of Colegio Jorge Washington, the local culture places great emphasis on the importance of relationships in the workplace. The literature discussed provided evidence that relationships are at the center of organizational change. A distributed model is suggested as a way for leaders to increase interactions among the faculty and to promote positive relationships. Considering the context of Colegio Jorge Washington, the most appropriate leadership model was adopted. For the six years before this study was conducted, Colegio Jorge Washington had been implementing a distributed model of leadership. The following strand provides background information on distributed leadership.

**Distributed Leadership**

Distributed leadership has been consistently increasing in popularity among schools, especially in the international school community. Colegio Jorge Washington, at the time of this study, had made the decision to implement a distributed leadership model. To better understand this model of leadership, this strand explores the origins of distributed leadership, provides an overview of the theory surrounding distributed leadership, and identifies the deficits in the literature describing the implementation of this leadership model.

**Origins of distributed leadership.** Although characteristics of distributed leadership can be found long before the 20th Century, this review of the literature begins with the work of Kurt Lewin in 1947. He shifted the thinking in social psychology, motivating the discipline to begin to consider the interactions between groups and the ever-changing environment surrounding them. Lewin called this “group dynamics” (Lewin, 1947).

Gibb (1947), meanwhile, proposed that there is not one single personality type that fits all leaders and all contexts. Instead, the success of a leader is highly dependent upon the functional
relationship between the leader and the social group surrounding that leader. Previous studies on leadership have been leader-centric, placing the weight of success or failure on the shoulders of the one heroic individual in the main leadership role. Gibb’s (1947) social psychological perspective laid the groundwork establishing that leadership is not a set of traits, but rather a dynamic interaction between personalities in a social context. The ideas posited by Gibb (1947) remained dormant for many years before later being resurrected by authors in the area of distributed leadership.

The next three scholars are all centered on the precepts of activity theory and distributed cognition. Vygotsky (1978) developed a basis for activity theory in his book entitled Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes. Within his framework, he described how actions can be viewed as collective instead of individual. His model examines the larger system in which individuals work and establishes the critical role of social interaction in the development of cognition (Vygotsky, 1978).

Hutchins (1995) built upon Vygotsky’s (1978) ideas and continued to develop the idea of distributed cognition. Previously, culture was accepted as an influence over the cognition of an individual. Hutchins (1995) asserted that cognition is socially distributed and highly influenced by culture. Engestrom (1999), meanwhile, also followed this train of thought stemming from Vygotsky (1978) regarding activity theory. Engestrom (1999) concluded that people, tools, and the situation influence cognitive activity. Leadership, therefore, is a product of this greater complex system; it is not just derived from the behavior of one main individual (Engestrom, 1999).

Using distributed cognition and activity theory, these theorists laid the foundational groundwork in for the creation of distributed leadership theory. In the early 2000s, the literature
exploded on the topic of distributed leadership. Following this extensive surge of new literature speaking about distributed leadership, the theory became widespread and prevalent.

**Distributed leadership defined.** Gronn (2002) interrelated the previously mentioned theories to form a modern theory of distributed leadership. Gronn (2002) used activity theory as a basis for the development of a definition for distributed leadership. Based on the prior idea that activity is jointly performed, he asserted that leadership responsibilities should be structurally divided among a greater number of individuals. He emphasized the benefits for better utilization of individual strengths and skills as this structure widens the net of intelligence and resources. Through this model, leadership can be seen as more than the sum of its parts (Gronn, 2002).

Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004) directed this conversation specifically to a school context. They developed a new framework for others to conduct future research on school leadership. Their framework is based upon the distributed perspective, asserting that school leadership is the interaction between leaders, followers, and the situation. This definition of leadership focuses on practice instead of actions. Practice is framed as the interactions between leaders, followers, and aspects of their situation (Spillane et al., 2004).

Spillane (2005), meanwhile, proposed another definition of distributed leadership referred to as leader-plus. This definition acknowledges that leading and managing a school may incorporate multiple team members, involving some formal and some informal roles. Individuals without a formal leadership title are able to participate in the work of leading and managing the school; however, not everyone on the faculty needs to share in the leadership (Spillane, 2005).

MacBeath, Oduro, and Waterhouse (2004) proposed six main forms of distributed leadership. They did not emphasize which form of distributed leadership is more effective.
Instead, they provided the six forms as options for school leaders to choose from, based on their unique context and set of circumstances (MacBeath, Oduro, & Waterhouse, 2004). Again, the authors considered the environment as a central piece in the selection of a suitable leadership model.

It is important to note the ongoing confusion surrounding the terms distributed leadership and shared leadership. Many make the mistake of using these terms interchangeably; they are actually distinct models of leadership (Fitzsimons, James, & Denyer, 2011). Shared leadership is seen as a reciprocal process of influence among established formal leaders. Those in leadership roles share the cognition process to co-lead. Distributed leadership focuses on the interactions between leaders and followers. Leadership in distributed leadership is not limited to those in formal leadership roles. The cognition in distributed leadership includes both humans and the context of the organization (Fitzsimons et al., 2011).

Despite the wide array of research and literature available on the theory of distributed leadership, there is still no consensus around a universal definition (Bolden, 2011; Tian, Risku, & Collin, 2016). Although there is not a universal definition, the most widely used descriptors for distributed leadership have come from Spillane’s (2005) work on practice and leader-plus. This study at Colegio Jorge Washington drew from these definitions posited by Spillane (2005).

**Distributed leadership in practice.** The array of definitions circulating, combined with the diverse contexts of organizations, results in a lack of consistency in the implementation of distributed leadership. Nonetheless, there is much to learn from the experience of other organizations as they attempt to implement distributed leadership. There are benefits and challenges that are found to be true across organizations. The following studies narrate the
trajectories of a variety of organizations on their journey towards a distributed perspective. There is much to glean from their experiences.

Serban and Roberts (2016) used a mixed methods approach to analyze previous empirical studies on distributed leadership. Their analysis revealed a strong correlation between distributed leadership and task satisfaction for team members. They defined key components within an internal team environment that lead to distributed leadership: shared purpose, social support, and opportunities to voice ideas. The study, however, did not provide enough evidence to demonstrate that distributed leadership leads to increased team performance.

Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling (2009) documented the experience of distributed leadership within the context of higher education. In this study, the researchers analyzed the benefits and challenges of the distributed approach. They found the benefits to include: “improved responsiveness to students, staff, and funding agencies; greater transparency of finances, managerial convenience through the distribution of managerial workloads; and improved teamwork and communication between academic and non-academic staff” (Bolden et al., 2009, pp. 266-267). They stated that challenges should be very few if implementation is managed well. The potential challenges, however, included: “organizational fragmentation and the creation of a silo mentality; reduced clarity of roles, leading to confusion and competition; slow decision-making; and an underestimation of individual differences in ability and unrealistic expectations of performance” (Bolden et al., 2009, p. 267).

Distributed leadership can also be found in practice in areas outside the field of education. Best et al. (2012) examined the application of distributed leadership in the health care system in Canada. Their realist review found that distributed leadership is a key component to creating lasting change in the health care system. Specifically, they discovered a link between
distributed leadership and a sustained commitment to change. The authors described in detail concrete ways in which this model of leadership can be aligned with top leadership (Best et al., 2012).

Heck and Hallinger’s (2010) large-scale longitudinal study looked closely at student achievement data over the course of four years after implementing a distributed leadership model. The study was conducted in 197 elementary schools in the United States. The findings showed significant growth in student learning in both reading and math (Heck & Hallinger, 2010). Although these findings are significant, more studies of this nature are necessary to determine with certainty the correlation between distributed leadership and student achievement.

The literature provides indicators that there are benefits and challenges associated with distributed leadership. Each school may experience those benefits and challenges differently, based on the interactions between leader and followers in the organization, the greater context of the organization, and the leadership structure in place. It is important for each organization to analyze the impact of distributed leadership within their own particular context in order to clearly understand the benefits and challenges presented. It is only through a research-based qualitative study that a non-biased perception can be formulated regarding the experiences of teacher leaders in this model of leadership.

**Research needs in distributed leadership.** Although research has rapidly developed on the topic of distributed leadership, there are still shortcomings in the literature. There are many facets of distributed leadership that are in need of additional research, distributed leadership is considered relatively young. To facilitate the further development of distributed leadership theory, a significant need exists for additional research. The following section of this literature review offers directions for further research in the area of distributed leadership.
The first area that is in clear need of further research is the definition of distributed leadership. Torrance (2013) conducted a study that challenged five of the assumptions generally held regarding distributed leadership. The article sent a clear message to organizations implementing distributed leadership: it is much more complex than it appears. Torrance (2013) called for a clear theory/definition of distributed leadership to be established for further research.

Many roles are involved in the implementation of distributed leadership. Clarke (2013) asserted: “We know little about the dynamics of role performance relating to team members adopting leadership roles” (p. 144). He was referring to the limited information available regarding the experience of those sharing in leadership responsibilities and activities in a distributed model. It remains unclear from theory and in practice how leadership is shared and its impact on the balance of organizational structures in differing contexts.

At the time of this study, further local research was needed at Colegio Jorge Washington to understand how teacher leaders described their experiences interacting with their colleagues. Teacher leader perceptions regarding their interactions with colleagues was valuable information missing from the school context. Thus, one goal of the research conducted at Colegio Jorge Washington was to help fill this gap in understanding permeating the literature by providing a local study.

**Conclusion of distributed leadership.** Distributed leadership is deeply rooted in social psychology. Its theoretical background has origins in distributed cognition and activity theory. After reviewing the literature to establish a definition for distributed leadership, it became clear that no universal definition exists. The most widely used definition stems from the work of Spillane (2005) on practice and leader-plus, which was used as a basis for this study at Colegio Jorge Washington. The benefits and challenges experienced when implementing distributed
leadership vary greatly based on the context of each organization. Since limited literature exploring distributed leadership in an international context exists, this researcher identified that further studies were required to gain a better understanding of this dynamic model. The experiences of teacher leaders interacting with their colleagues within a distributed model is one area in particular that is lacking in the literature. As an international school, Colegio Jorge Washington when this study was conducted, was seeking to better understand how teacher leaders described their experiences interacting with their colleagues within a distributed leadership model.

**Dynamics of Teacher Leadership**

In an aim to study leadership among teachers, it is imperative that there is a clear understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and experiences of teacher leaders. The literature presented in this strand provides a basis to further understand these dynamics. As teachers engage in leadership, they begin to experience a shift in their experiences in the workplace. This review now turns to an examination of how teachers perceive their experiences as leaders.

**Teacher leadership roles.** Teacher leadership roles are opportunities for faculty members to serve by taking on new responsibilities. One of the most common teacher leadership positions has always been that of department head or lead teacher. More opportunities became available when the role of teacher mentor became more popular. In recent years, the position of instructional leader or instructional coach has teachers to step into a role that could have a direct impact on the teaching and learning in the classroom (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Teacher leadership can take many shapes and forms. Despite the varied roles and definitions, teacher leaders are known to “lead beyond the classroom and contribute to the community of learners” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, p. 17). Some of the common duties that
teacher leaders assume include: observing teachers and provide feedback, modeling lessons and providing guidance to teachers, attending conferences and re-delivering knowledge to peers, planning professional development, facilitating communication, and developing curriculum (Angelle, 2007).

Considering the responsibilities that teacher leaders assume, there are certain skills that are known to lead to greater success. Those essential skills include collegiality, collaboration, and communication (Angelle, 2007). Teachers that fit this profile experience a higher rate of acceptance from staff and overall success. Although expertise in leadership is a beneficial skill for a teacher leader, the ability to influence colleagues and take risks is equally as important. The goal of using all of these skills should always remain focused on improving student learning, which is the top priority for teacher leaders (Feiler, Heritage, & Gallimore, 2000).

Being a teacher leader is not attractive to everyone. There are several common reasons why teachers choose not to participate in leadership roles. Some may choose not to participate in leadership roles because they do not want to confront complicated issues or ask difficult questions. Others may not step into such a role because they do not want to make decisions that have the potential to make them unpopular among their colleagues (Angelle, 2007).

At Colegio Jorge Washington, being a teacher leader requires much of the same responsibilities and characteristics that are described in the literature. Lead teachers at Colegio Jorge Washington are expected to collaborate with colleagues to accomplish shared goals from the school improvement plan. They are responsible for meeting the professional development needs of their specific subject area, and they ensure that the adopted curriculum and programs are implemented with fidelity across classrooms and grade levels. The acquisition of all resource needs, for their subject, is also under the authority of these teacher leaders. When this study was
conducted, within this current leadership structure, the workload was heavy and the influence of teacher leaders was high. This may have cause the teacher leaders at Colegio Jorge Washington who participated in this study to bring a mix of both positive and negative experiences to the discussions about their challenging leadership positions.

**Mixed experiences of teacher leaders.** Teacher leaders have mixed experiences in their roles as leaders. They discover the satisfaction of making a difference on a larger scale; however, at some point in their path of leadership, they discover that there are obstacles along the way. Resources and time are commonly cited as barriers to success for teacher leaders (Harris, 2003). These are limitations that exist in most schools, to some extent. Successful teacher leaders must learn to advocate for time and budgetary allocations; they must work within the constraints that exist in their context.

The greatest opposition to teacher leadership success comes from fellow colleagues. All too often, fellow teachers do not give the necessary respect or authority to the teacher leader. Some may even criticize them as being power hungry in the new position (Bowman, 2004). Some other teachers may just be resistant to any sort of change that is brought by a leader.

Teacher leaders sometimes serve as a liaison between teachers and administration. They need to keep a pulse on staff morale and administrative intentions simultaneously. This can put teacher leaders in a difficult situation when they must uphold a top-down decision, even when they personally disagree. Top-down leadership and teacher leadership do not combine well (Raffanti, 2008). Some colleagues may react by assuming an unhealthy “us vs. them” mentality as they begin to see teacher leaders as part of the administrative team. They commonly make judgments that teacher leaders are “wannabe administrators” or they are going to the “dark side.”
As teacher leaders become aware of the mixed reactions of their colleagues, they must strategically navigate within the environment to achieve success. Teacher leaders often gravitate towards teachers who are more receptive to collaborating, and they invest their time in supporting these individuals (Raffanti, 2008). This action may create a divide between teacher leaders and the rest of their colleagues (Barth, 2001).

Due to these dynamics, the most successful teacher leaders are those that are best able to encourage their colleagues to change. “They realized that without maintaining positive, collegial relationships, their ability to exercise influence was diminished” (Raffanti, 2008, p. 64). Being able to joke around in the halls and maintain a personable relationship was found to be a common strategy for teacher leaders. In order to fulfill their challenging responsibilities while maintaining positive relationships requires what Goleman (1996) refers to as social intelligence.

The support of the administrator, the principal, is fundamental to a positive experience for teacher leadership. For a principal to support teacher leaders, a few strategies have been identified as effective: empower others; promote and communicate a shared vision; create a culture of collaboration; hold high expectations for innovation; provide resources; and demonstrate trust, support, and care for the team. Above all, principals must communicate clearly what the expectations are for the teacher leaders (Angelle, 2007).

To truly understand the perception of teacher leaders, it is necessary to listen carefully to their voices. In this study documenting the experiences of teacher leadership at Colegio Jorge Washington, teachers were asked to share their authentic experiences related to interacting with their colleagues in a distributed leadership model. Through increased understanding of how teacher leaders described their interactions with their colleagues, principals can use these experiences to more effectively provide support for teacher leaders.
**Trusting collaboration.** The collaborative relationships within a school influence how faculty members interact with one another. For teachers to experience the benefits of distributed leadership in their interactions, trust must first be developed. As leaders work alongside colleagues, they must remain vulnerable to admit that they do not have all of the answers. Vulnerability is a necessary element in creating trust when teachers are being asked to participate in the scholar-practitioner process. Thornton and Cherrington (2014) wisely concluded: “Relational trust is the connective tissue that binds individuals together to advance the education and welfare of students” (p. 95). School leaders must be intentional about establishing trust for distributed leadership to thrive.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) were an integral aspect of creating trust at Colegio Jorge Washington for the three-year period prior to this study. PLCs require intimate collaboration among teachers. Teachers who participate in PLCs must expose their instructional weaknesses with their PLC to focus on new strategies that will help their students improve. “The presence of relational trust made it more likely that teachers engaged in collaborative enquiry and felt comfortable to challenge practice” (Thornton & Cherrington, 2014, p. 101). In other words, teachers are not open to growing and learning together unless they believe that the others in the group are willing to do the same.

As this community learns and grows together, collaborative relationships begin to form. With this increased involvement comes enhanced support for change initiatives. “The opportunity to influence the outcome of a decision and protect personal interests influences the level of employees’ organizational commitment” (Farndale, Van Ruiten, Kelliher, & Hope-Hailey, 2011, p.125). As the team becomes committed to change, partnerships in learning emerge, resulting in a growth of innovative practices.
PLCs are the threads of trust woven together to create trusting relationships at Colegio Jorge Washington. This is a formal collaborative structure (Schaubroeck, Lam, & Cha, 2007). “Collaboration, shared decision making, reflective practice, quality professional development, and shared goals are all part of an organizational culture that promotes the high expectations and school-wide learning necessary for successful teacher leadership” (Angelle, 2007, p. 59). This researcher determined that, once the distributed leadership model was well established at Colegio Jorge Washington and PLCs were fully implemented, it was time to step back and better understand how teacher leaders described their experiences interacting with colleagues.

**Conclusion of teacher leadership dynamics.** This researcher understood that there was much to learn about the experiences of teacher leaders at Colegio Jorge Washington. By thoughtfully listening to the voices of teacher leaders, the goal of this study was to better understand how they described their experiences interacting with colleagues. In this process, the aim was to better understand those critical relationships that were present between teacher leaders and their colleagues. Based on the literature, it can be assumed that the nature of those interactions has a strong impact on the success of teacher leaders. This study thus analyzed the mixed experiences of teacher leaders, leading to increased understanding. It is hoped that these results can help give further consideration to the role, and possibly make adjustments, in order to improve support for teacher leaders.

**Sensemaking**

As teacher leaders interact with colleagues in their leadership roles, they are confronted with an overwhelming amount of information and stimuli. Given that that information leaders are presented with an increased amount of information to process, they commonly struggle to make sense of it all (Blandford & Attfield, 2010). To enable individuals to pause and make
sense of their experiences, it was necessary to develop a framework for them to process all of the stimuli they are experiencing. Sensemaking became a way for individuals to organize the unknown and to support a more positive reaction (Ancona, 2012).

**Weick’s framework of sensemaking.** Weick (2005) asserted: “Sensemaking involves turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard into action” (p. 1). Researchers commonly use a sensemaking framework in the field of education to make sense of policy changes, curriculum reform, and implementation of new instructional practices (Coburn, 2005). Sensemaking can be a complex and messy process, with no clear beginning and end. Therefore, it is important for researchers to have a systematic process to guide them through their sensemaking processes.

Weick’s framework of sensemaking involves seven key characteristics. It is: (a) grounded in identity construction, (b) retrospective, (c) enactive of sensible environments, (d) able to engage in social activity, (e) ongoing, (f) extracting of cues, and (g) plausible over accuracy (Weick, 1995). These characteristics are each independent, yet they also are interrelated to one another. The following subsections provide more detailed information regarding each of Weick’s (1995) seven sensemaking characteristics.

**Grounded in identity construction.** This first property of sensemaking centers on the construction of an individual’s self-identity. Individuals are constantly attempting to understand the environment around them and how they fit into it. At the same time, they are also reacting to the environment, scenarios, and other people (Weick, 1995). Our identity shapes the lens through which we see the world, and this identity is always transforming based on interactions new lived experiences (Mills et al, 2010). As teachers take on leadership roles, their own self-concept may shift based on the perceptions that others. They may begin to identify
more as a leader than a follower, or some combination of the two. Employees can also associate their identity with the organizational identity or the identity of their role. An example of this is the Mann Gulch tragedy where firefighters did not drop their tools (their professional identity) even when it cost them their lives since the weight of the tools kept them from escaping the fire (Weick, 1995).

**Retrospective.** The second property of retrospection is the ability to look at both what has occurred in the past and be aware of what is happening in the present moment, which immediately becomes the past. Weick (1995) says it best in asserting, “How can I know what I think until I see what I say?” (p. 25). Retrospection is an intentional reflection with the purpose of better understanding the present within the context of the past. Retrospection determines how individuals perceive current events and situations occurring around them (Weick, 1995).

**Enactive of sensible environments.** Enactment refers to the process of co-constructing new meaning when there is change or uncertainty in the environment. People naturally enact meaning when confronted with change to help explain the ambiguity they are experiencing (Blight, 2011). For example, colleagues may engage in a discussion that allows them to simplify the events taking place to help navigate the complexities of the issues at hand. As a result, they can more easily discover possible actions to deal with the uncertainty in the current environment (Weick, 2011). When they do take action, there will be a direct impact on the environment; which will cause another reaction in the employees, as they seek to respond to the newly impacted environment. The cycle continues as individuals and groups continue to make sense and enact change upon the environment (Weick, 1995).

**Able to engage in social activity.** The fourth property describes how social activity influences the sensemaking process. The voice of each individual in the organization is melded
together with the thoughts and ideas of their colleagues with whom they have had interactions. As a teacher leader engages in interactions with colleagues, there is an inevitable impact on the way that teacher leader sees the environment, situation, or decision at hand. Social interactions influence the way in which individuals make sense of the world around them. Even when making a decision alone, the influences of those around us are always playing a role in that decision-making process. Social activity is more than just interactions with colleagues. Even interactions with the organizational culture, such as policies, procedures, and traditions are part of the social influences in our sensemaking (Mills et al., 2010).

**Ongoing.** Sensemaking is an ongoing process with no beginning and no end. There is no way to pause the sensemaking process or to bring it to come to a conclusion. Each new enactment triggers a new opportunity for sensemaking and to construct shared meaning. The complexity of organizations requires employees to constantly sort through situations and find meaning. The ongoing property of sensemaking tells us that there is an ever-changing set of data that must be continuously analyzed in the context of lived experiences (Ancona, 2012). As employees are provided with feedback, their perspectives shift, and they again seek to understand and make sense of their environment based on their new perspective (Weick, 2010).

**Extracting of cues.** Extracting cues from any given event helps to fill in the details of the overarching story and ultimately increases understanding. The process of extracting cues allows employees to see a clearer picture of the environment and their place within that context. It is natural that people tend to look for cues that fit into their previous understandings. That is why it is important for this process to be done in social collaboration with others (Weick, 1995).

**Plausible over accuracy.** Weick’s framework of sensemaking is based on plausibility over accuracy. Sensemaking is not aiming to discover truth. Accuracy is not a realistic goal in
the world of rapid organizational change. Many times, decision-making is not based on a clear right or wrong set of options. Instead, sensemaking aims to create new meaning based on the ongoing interpretation of cues from the ever-changing environment. Plausibility provides sensemakers with the opportunity to continue making sense of the environment over time and to enact changes as deemed reasonable and appropriate (Weick, 1995).

**Conclusion of sensemaking.** This review of the literature on sensemaking reveals a comprehensive and integrated framework developed by Weick (1995). Weick’s framework of sensemaking has provided researchers with a systematic process to guide participants toward gaining understanding of events and situations in their organization. Teacher leaders may struggle to make sense of the complexities of their interactions with colleagues. Sensemaking is a tool that will help them to simplify their experiences through ongoing reflection.

**Argument of Advocacy**

The literature on the topic of leadership is extensive and has evolved greatly during the turn of the century. A myriad of leadership models to choose from exist. Researchers have determined that the context of the organization should play a vital role in the selection of the leadership model. In selecting the most appropriate leadership model for Colegio Jorge Washington, it was necessary to analyze both the local Colombian culture and the organizational context. The local culture has a strong focus on relationship and collaboration. The school’s organizational structure did not, at the time the study was conducted, include a district office, leaving major curriculum and instruction decisions to be made by the principal. In order for principals to successfully manage this workload, Colegio Jorge Washington had strategically selected a distributed model of leadership.
Over the six years before this study was conducted, a distributed perspective towards leadership had been adopted. Research on the practical implementation of a distributed model of leadership is limited. Each organization may implement distributed leadership in their own unique way to meet their individual needs. The benefits and challenges experienced by teachers within this context of leadership is mixed. There is a need for research on distributed leadership in the context of international schools. This study thus sought to better understand how teacher leaders describe their experiences interacting with their colleagues within a distributed leadership model.

To understand the experiences of teachers, it became essential that participants engaged in the process of sensemaking. The researcher needed to allow them to first self-reflect so that they could make sense of their own experiences and share their thoughts. By carefully listening to the voices of the teachers, this study aimed to begin to understand how teachers make sense of their experiences. The literature shared the obstacles that frequently accompany the position of teacher leader. By listening to the experiences of individual who were part of such a coterie, this researcher aimed to discover how teacher leaders at Colegio Jorge Washington described their interactions with colleagues. The goal of this research pursuit was to shed light on the potential areas in which the school administration might change to make adjustments to improve the overall support for teacher leaders.

The interactions of teacher leaders and their colleagues ultimately impact the school culture. Those interactions, formed through structures like PLCs, are the cornerstone in building trusting collaborative relationships. In a cyclical fashion, those relationships also influence the interactions of teacher leaders and their colleagues. Due to this close relationship, it is essential
to have a sound understanding of how teacher leaders describe their interactions with their colleagues at Colegio Jorge Washington.

**Conclusion**

This review of the literature provided clarity regarding the need to better understand how teacher leaders describe their experiences interacting with their colleagues within the context of a distributed leadership model in an international school. This qualitative study allowed teachers to have the opportunity to reflect and share how they were making sense of their experiences interacting as leaders. The outcomes of this study have the capacity to add to the body of knowledge on the topic, especially for the community of international schools engaged in implementing a distributed model of leadership. The conclusions rendered forth also have the potential to provide feedback to enable the Colegio Jorge Washington administration to better support teacher leaders. The next chapter provides a detailed outline of the methodology used for this research study.
Chapter 3: Research Design

Qualitative Research Approach

The intention of this chapter is to explain the research methodological approach used for this study. This chapter will include a description of the research design, participants, the procedures for data collection, data analysis, criteria for quality qualitative research, and the study limitations. The purpose of this qualitative research study is to provide a strong description of the perceptions of formal teacher leaders in an attempt to understand the complex processes that occur in this role and in their relationships with colleagues (Creswell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2014).

This research study will specifically assist in gaining a better understanding of how teacher leaders make sense of their experiences interacting with their colleagues, within a distributed leadership model, in the context of an international school. In essence, the researcher explored how the teacher leaders construct and interpret the reality of their social experiences with their colleagues. To advance this goal and generate beneficial results, the following research question was designed: How do teacher leaders make sense of their interactions with colleagues within the context of a distributed leadership model in an international school? An additional sub-question was developed: How do teacher leaders describe their relationships with colleagues as they make sense of their interactions within the context of a distributed leadership model in an international school? These questions provided focus to the study and guided the execution of this qualitative research approach (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Strategy of Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative methodology simply refers to research that produces descriptive data (Taylor, Bodan, & DeVault, 2015). When comparing qualitative research versus quantitative research, it
was apparent that qualitative research was the most appropriate approach for this study. Qualitative research uses a real-life approach to gain understanding of happenings in context-specific surroundings (Hoepfl, 1997). The primary function of qualitative research is to study the meaning people have created, or how they make sense of their experiences and world, to achieve an understanding of the participants’ perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In comparison, quantitative research assembles numerical data to tests hypotheses (McCusker & Guynaydin, 2015).

The qualitative design met the nature and purpose of this research study. Qualitative research is appropriate for research in the educational setting because it helps a researcher to assess social interactions and understand the difficulties that occur (Cooley, 2013). Since the primary purpose of qualitative research is to study the meaning people have created of experiences, and this research study aims to provide descriptions of the perceptions of teacher leaders, it is apparent that qualitative research is a good fit for this study.

Creswell (2013) explained the features of qualitative research: the research occurs in a natural setting; the primary role of the researcher is to become the instrument for gathering data; several forms of data are collected; and inductive analysis creates themes. The qualitative approach of this study sought to provide insights of the lived experiences of teacher leaders interacting with their colleagues within the context of distributed leadership. The study provided input towards improving support for teacher leaders.

**Constructivist-interpretivist paradigm.** The paradigm of constructivism-interpretivism informed this qualitative, descriptive, single case study research and guided the case study design, data collection, and final analysis (Creswell, 2014). This paradigm is rooted in the assumption that the subjective experiences and values of each person shape their reality and truth
(Ponterotto, 2005). Reality is created in the mind of the individual; it is not an external event. Furthermore, different people shape different realities of the same experience. Meaning is created through the interactions of the researcher and the participants and is qualitative in nature (Merriam, 1991; Ponterotto, 2005). By gaining an understanding of the experiences of the participants, meaning and understanding of reality are developed (Ponterotto, 2005).

This paradigm is compatible with the methodological approach of this research study given that individual interviews were used for data collection. It was expected that the teacher leaders would hold varying perspectives, true to this paradigm. It was the goal of this research study to gather and analyze multiple truths or realities, not prove or disprove a theory.

A research design should also be built on the researcher’s framework or beliefs, and on how these assumptions link to the methods utilized in a study (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher focused on the sensemaking of teacher leaders as they told the stories of their experiences within a distributed model of leadership to provide insight into the questions under study. By orally sharing experiences, they were able to make sense of the ongoing interactions with colleagues within the context of an international school. Through the theoretical framework of sensemaking, the data converged to create a focused and clear image of the phenomena under study. The researcher specifically focused on the sensemaking property of “social activity” as a tool for gaining understanding of teacher leader thinking and communication (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005).

Case Study Strategy and Intended Outcomes

It is understood that the case study method is fitting when a “how” or “why” question is being asked about a current set of events that the investigator cannot control (Yin, 2009, 2014). The nature and methodology of a case study involves clarifying real-life conditions which may
not be illuminated through other types of research (Zainal, 2007). More specifically, a qualitative case study can be explained as a thorough, all-inclusive description and analysis of a single phenomenon (Merriam, 1988).

In qualitative studies, the intention is to collect the individual perspectives of the common experiences (Hodges, 2011). The intention is not to produce extension findings for generalization to a broad population (Hodges, 2011). The researcher thoughtfully considered the boundaries of the case study to avoid it becoming too extensive or too limited (Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, & Robertson, 2013).

In a case study, the researcher should select a small number of participants to ensure that an in-depth understanding of the experience of each individual is obtained (Creswell, 2015a). A case study population can be a single individual, several individuals, or an activity (Creswell, 2015a). This study concentrated on the experiences of a small number of participants allowing for meaningful depth of insight into the topic rather than striving to seek a generalizable model.

Source of case study strategy. One of the most frequently used methods in qualitative research is case study research (Yazan, 2015). Case study research began out of the need to study and understand social phenomenon that cannot be measured with statistics, but that requires deep narrative writing. The case study method developed from several disciplines including anthropology, sociology, and psychology (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Hamel, Dufour, and Fortin (1993) founded the case study approach studies at the University of Chicago, beginning in the 1920’s (Creswell, 2013). The principal functions of case studies are to explore, describe, and explain social phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).
Miles and Huberman (1994) explained the case study approach using the metaphor of a heart, which can be considered as the epicenter or emphasis of the study. The heart is enclosed in a circle that determines the boundaries of the area to be investigated. In this study, the heart or central point was the social experiences of the teacher leaders and their interactions with colleagues as viewed through the framework of sensemaking. The boundaries of this investigation were defined from within a distributed leadership model in the context of an international school in Colombia.

Seminal researchers who have significantly influenced case study research are Yin, Stake, and Merriam. These seminal researchers approach case study research from the viewpoint that truth is relative and dependent on individual perspectives (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yazan, 2015). Yin (2009) explained a case study as a first-hand exploration that investigates an existing phenomenon, within its real-life context; boundaries are unclear between the phenomenon and its context. Merriam (1998) suggested that a case study is a comprehensive explanation and analysis of a single phenomenon. Stake (1995) was distinctive in noting that a case study is both the process and product of learning about the case.

The three scholars approach the case study design process from different perspectives. Yin (2009) considered the design process as a logical sequence of steps from the initial research questions, to data, and lastly to conclusion. Stake (1995), meanwhile, interpreted a case study to be connected with the topic studied rather than with a specific methodology and called for researchers to have design flexibility as they proceed through the study. Lastly, Merriam (1998) emphasized the value of the literature review in contributing to the design. For the past 30 years, Yin (2014) has been one of the seminal authors leading the advancement and authentication of
the case study approach in the field of education. This researcher utilized Yin’s approach for the research design, data collection strategies, and data analysis.

**Suitability of case study strategy.** The case study method is well suited for the research subject, the questions posed, and the researcher’s communicative manner. The intense reflective focus of a case study provided the structure needed to examine and understand teacher leader perceptions within the genuine context of real life (Barratt, Choi, & Li, 2008; Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2011, 2014). The case study method allowed the participants to be listened to and delivered rich data that provided beneficial insights for education. Furthermore, the style of a descriptive case study provides a detailed account of the subject being studied (Yin, 2014). Unlike the exploratory or explanatory case studies which focus on general exploration or causality, a descriptive case study fully enlightens one to the complexities of an experience (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

This research study design was specifically conducted via a descriptive case study methodology which provided the best method to obtain the intended outcome. Descriptive case studies supply rich depictions and a deep understanding of the problem being investigated (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The descriptive case study approach enabled the context of the school to be explored through the examination of teacher leader interactions from a distributed leadership lens within the theoretical framework of sensemaking. This strategy provided personalized information from the teacher leaders to address the research questions and allowed the researcher to gain a clearer understanding of their perceptions.

**Influence of case study on interview questions.** The case study strategy was designed to investigate the participants making sense of their interactions within a complex phenomenon. The case study design inherently provided the structure for the researcher to ask the questions
and to acquire a rich understanding of teacher leaders’ experiences when interacting with colleagues, in the context of their specific school setting (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). This descriptive case study approach shaped the thought-provoking questions asked during the interviews.

**Influence of case study on data.** Descriptive data from the case study strategy results in rich, “thick” explanations of the phenomenon under study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The questions aimed to provide insightful data by having the participants describe how they were able to make sense of their teacher leader experiences interacting with their colleagues. The intent of collecting data from this human interaction was to produce specific and detailed knowledge. This process of uncovering the participants’ motivations, intent, or emotions assisted in revealing the social context and connections between the teacher leaders and their colleagues. The data extracted allowed the researcher to identify and understand the human social dimension of teacher leader interactions within the local context of the school. The information gathered explains not just behaviors, but also the context in which the behaviors occurred, so that the case study becomes meaningful to someone outside of the system.

**Influence of case study on data analysis.** Creswell (2014) and Merriam & Tisdell (2015) asserted that qualitative research involves an inductive process which influences the development of patterns and themes. The inductive approach is consistent with the research questions, with qualitative research, and with a descriptive case study.

In this case study, through the inductive process, patterns were discovered from the data. Within these patterns, an understanding was acquired of how teacher leaders describe their experiences interacting with their colleagues within a distributed leadership model (Yin, 2014). While embracing the differences between each individual, all of the different stories of these
personal connections together were used to extract insightful patterns, establish themes, and find contrasts in the interactions.

The analysis of this complex data, and its patterns and themes, helps to understand the experiences of the people involved in these interactions more completely and to illuminate new possibilities of understanding. The analysis can also reveal the social context of connections between data. The analysis may also expose the reasoning behind the data patterns or themes. The researcher used the data to build assertions and move towards a more thorough understanding of the teacher leader experience interacting with colleagues.

**Participant Suitability to Research Purpose and Questions**

In this case study, the researcher investigated the perceptions of teacher leaders at an international school who agreed to participate. Consistent with the purpose statement and research questions, the participants for this study needed to be current teacher leaders within the international school. The definition of a teacher leader used to identify participants was any individual with a formal leadership position or a teacher who assumed certain leadership responsibilities without a formal title. The researcher identified participants based on Spillane’s definition of leader-plus, which states the individuals may be in formally designated positions or may be teachers who assume certain leadership responsibilities without a formal title (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004).

Each teacher leader was recruited to participate in the research and to provide their perceptions of their experiences interacting with their colleagues within a distributed leadership model. Data obtained from the participants was used to answer the question: How do teacher leaders make sense of their interactions with colleagues in a distributed model of leadership within the context of an international school? The additional sub-question was: How do teacher
leaders describe their relationships with colleagues as they attempt to make sense of their interactions? These questions provided focus to the study and guided the execution of this qualitative study (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The participants were all Caucasians in the age range of 25-45 who had baccalaureate degrees in education. The sample included five females and one male. There was no exclusion based on age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic level, literacy level or health condition.

**Research Setting**

When employing single case study research, the purpose is to understand one singular case rather than multiple cases (Stake, 1995). Therefore, the bounded system where the data was gathered for this study was one selected school setting. The study took place at a single school site located in Colombia, South America. The school is a private, non-profit, co-educational, N-12 school located in Colombia offering a dual American/Colombian education.

Access to the research site must be formally acquired by requesting authorization from the site gatekeeper, for example, the school superintendent (Feldman, Bell, & Berger, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Obtaining permission is easier when positive relationships are established between the researcher and the gatekeeper (Bogden & Biklen, 2003). For this study, the researcher had established the necessary positive relationships and the site was readily accessible, given that the researcher is employed at the setting.

Through informal conversations with the school superintendent, support was articulated for this study to be conducted at the site. The researcher communicated via secure e-mail to the school superintendent to formally request permission to conduct the study at the site (Appendix A). The school superintendent approved that teachers from the school could be involved as participants in this study. A response e-mail from the school superintendent noting approval for
the study is provided (Appendix B). After admittance was achieved, the researcher was mindful that, despite the positive relationships, the subjects selected might exercise a certain degree of resistance (Bogden & Biklen, 2003).

Sampling

To ensure the research question is clearly answered and the researcher has the means to yield fruitful data about the phenomenon, it is imperative to have the participant sample be relevant (Curtis, Gesler, Smith, & Washburn, 2000; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In this research study, purposive sampling was utilized to identify teacher leader participants who possessed the specific experiences, perspectives, and insights to supply the most beneficial data for the topic being researched (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2002). Purposive sampling can be described as the intentional selection of participants (Creswell, 2013). This strategy can be further explained as choosing a setting with people deliberately selected who can provide a significant contribution of knowledge that cannot be obtained from another population (Maxwell, 2013).

Sample size. A case study population can be a single individual, several individuals, or an activity (Creswell, 2015a). To ensure that an in-depth understanding of each participant is acquired, the researcher should select a small number of participants (Creswell, 2015a). Qualitative researchers generally study fewer people, but they usually delve more deeply into the experiences of those individuals, hoping to generate a subjective understanding of “how” and “why” people perceive, reflect, role-take, interpret, and interact.

Baker and Edwards (2012), gathered a number of expert opinions in an attempt to answer the question of how many interviews are needed in qualitative research. The overarching thought was that the number depends on the nature and purpose of the study and the focus of the
analysis. One interview may be sufficient depending on the purpose of the research. It was also noted that a small number of interviews with rich data is more valuable than a large number of superficial interviews. The essential determinate is that the data needs to yield the desired outcome. In addition, several experts noted that the quality of the data analysis is more important than the quantity of interviews.

In this research project, six teacher leaders participated. The participants were identified using Spillane’s definition of the leader-plus aspect of distributed leadership. These six participants contributed to the collection of data to answer the research questions. This sample size of six participants is commensurate with current studies which have used the case study methodology.

**Data Collection Process**

The researcher interviewed individual participants in person. At the interview, expectations were reviewed by the researcher and it was reiterated that partaking in the study was voluntary. Participants were informed that they were free to decline from answering any question if they did not feel comfortable for any reason. The researcher also verbally reminded each participant that they were free to withdraw from participating in the study at any time.

Qualitative data was collected in this study using the interview protocol provided (Appendix C). The interview focused on the participant’s experiences as a teacher leader within a distributed model of leadership. Interviews took place at the location of the participant’s choice to respect preference and confidentiality. Individual interviews lasted approximately one hour. The exact length of time of each interview varied depending on the length of the participant’s responses. Each interview persisted until the questions in the interview protocol had been answered.
When interviewing, the researcher sought to connect to the participants, which aligns with the philosophy of the constructivism-interpretivism paradigm (Ponterotto, 2005). When the researcher connects and develops empathy with the participants, the researcher is better able to understand the subjects’ viewpoint of the issues (Taylor et al., 2015). Therefore, deeper meaning is revealed through this bonding between the researcher and the participants. The indispensable relationship between the interviewer and interviewee means both individuals shape the interview process (King, 1994).

To ensure productive interviews, the researcher worked to create a relaxed environment facilitating collaboration and partnership and to build trust to encourage the sharing of personal thoughts and perceptions. In this effort to obtain deep and detailed data, the researcher performed responsive interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The goal of this approach to interviewing was to allow the researcher to understand the stories being told and to obtain vivid and detailed answers that were rich with thematic material.

In addition, by using Weick’s (1995) theory of sensemaking, the researcher was attentive to the social interactions within the school which helped him to gain an understanding of what was occurring. The researcher then distinguished patterns from the data collected. These patterns conveyed the stories of the participants (Butin, 2010).

Throughout each interview, the researcher took field notes which provided additional data and which facilitated attentive listening (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Yin (2014) clarified that field notes can take various forms. In this study, field notes included both the participants’ main points and any notes of the researcher’s assumptions to carry out the self-checking or bracketing process (Creswell, 2013; Ponterotto, 2005).
The design of the interview process allowed the researcher to collect and systematically analyze data that led to the composition of patterns and themes. The researcher reviewed the data clusters and patterns and strove to construct descriptions of participants’ understandings, knowledge, and experiences. The outcome of this process provided a rich in-depth understanding of the research problem. Throughout this study, the data were utilized to build statements and to move towards a more thorough understanding of the teacher leader experience in collaborating with colleagues.

**Nature of data collected.** The personal interview is the primary pathway to obtaining information that explains the varied truths underlying a phenomenon (Stake, 1995). Therefore, it was the personal interview technique that was used to collect data in this research study. It was the intent that the interactional interview questions would trigger the participants to reflect on their experiences and then lead them to gain new insights and understandings (Taylor, Bodan, & DeVault, 2015).

The semi-structured interview process that was employed resembled more guided dialogues, lacking the strict organization of a structured inquiry (Yin, 2014). Interviewing involves presenting open-ended questions intended to obtain an understanding of participants’ experiences and perceptions (Rosenthal, 2016). It is recommended that the researcher prepare a number of questions in advance and then further illuminate responses with follow-up questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Additional probing or questioning strives to ensure clarity of data when the researcher is presented with unclear or incomplete answers (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2015). In this semi-structured interview format, varying individual perspectives were revealed by providing the teacher leaders the opportunity to retell the reality of their personal experience (Butin, 2010). This process is an advantage of interviewing, and it helps to guide the
interviewees to communicate their story and deliver an understanding of social phenomena from their unique perspective (Miller & Glassner, 2016).

**Approval from Institutional Review Board.** The researcher completed the formal recruitment process as outlined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Northeastern University in order to perform this research. A completed application for Approval for Use of Human Participants in Research was submitted to request IRB approval. The researcher’s request for this study was approved by the IRB Northeastern University.

**Data built on questions of interest.** The research study questions provided focus and guided the inquiry of the phenomenon under investigation and the execution of this research study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The nature of this qualitative research, and the specific selected case for this study, was to explore and search for the understanding of teacher leader participants’ perceptions regarding their interactions with colleagues in a distributed model of leadership. This case study occurred within the context of an international school in Colombia.

The researcher established the interview protocol by featuring data collection questions that revealed content as identified in the central and sub-questions for this study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2014). The interview protocol was designed to collect data on the discovery of the participants’ teacher leader experiences interacting with their colleagues within a distributed leadership model. The interview protocol can be found in Appendix C.

Therefore, in this context of discovery, the researcher created open-ended interview questions which enabled the collection of data from the small purposive sample of teacher leaders who volunteered to participate. The interview questions used in this study were guided by the characteristics of Weick’s (1995) sensemaking theory with the expectation of making sense through an analysis of the data collected. The interview questions allowed the
phenomenon of teacher leader experiences with their colleagues to be investigated and led to an acquisition of an in-depth comprehension of the construct.

Throughout this study, narrative data was collected and analyzed through an inductive process that created a portrait of the research questions (Fraenkel et al., 2015; Yin, 2014). The answers to the research questions were analyzed through the structure of Weick’s (1995) organizational sensemaking model, which is grounded in social psychology. The researcher understood the principle that people make sense of phenomena through their current personal worldview and existing beliefs (Weick, 1995). In other words, people explain and create their own reality. The research study questions and the data collected explored how teacher leaders make sense of their interactions with their colleagues.

**Participant recruitment and finalization.** Teacher leaders were recruited, and those who agreed to participate were selected. In general, the teachers involved articulated an interest in learning more about the essence of their expanded teacher leader role through which they provide support to their colleagues, the school principal, and ultimately the students by strengthening the quality of their learning. The researcher distributed the recruitment letters directly to the secure email addresses of each identified potential participant, inviting them to participate in the study (Appendix D). In the recruitment letter, the researcher provided a short overview of the purpose of the study.

If a positive response was received, a secure confirmation e-mail (Appendix E) was sent to formally acknowledge their participation, to provide more detailed information about the study, and to coordinate logistics by requesting preferences for the date, time, and location of the interview. Prior to interviewing, the researcher met, individually, with each participant who agreed to participate and provided a detailed oral explanation of the scope of the study and the
role of the participant. The researcher answered any questions that each individual had at that
time. Once all questions and concerns were addressed, the researcher presented the Signed
Informed Consent Form (Appendix F) for review and to obtain an approval signature.

This consent form provided specific details of the study and informed participants
partaking in the study that involvement was voluntary and that their participation or non-
participation would in no way affect other relationships (e.g., employer, school, etc.). The
participants were informed that they could discontinue their commitment in the research program
at any time without penalty or costs of any nature, character, or kind. The researcher also
verbally reminded each participant that they were free to withdraw from participating in the
study at any time. The researcher reviewed the consent form with each participant and asked for
signed consent and also verbal agreement on an audio recording (Appendix C of interview
protocol).

A signed informed consent form was required for each participant prior to them being
interviewed for this study. Only participants who responded to the recruitment letter and later
signed the consent form (Appendix F) were included in the study. All of the potential
participants were native English speakers, so language translation was not required. There were
no individuals identified in this study that belonged to a vulnerable population as defined by the
IRB.

Audio recording process. The researcher asked each participant for permission to audio
record the interview and for the audio recording to be transcribed. Each interview was audio-
recorded by an electronic application called “AudioMemos” on two separate devices (the
researcher’s iPad and iPhone) to ensure the audio was captured. AudioMemos has no limit to
audio-length, and electronic recordings can be transferred to a computer as mp4 or .wav files.
The electronic recordings of the interviews and all other electronic documents were downloaded and then saved to the researcher’s personal USB flash drive and to his personal external hard drive. All files were encrypted and password-protected.

Upon concluding the interview process, the audio files were submitted to be transcribed with alias names for each participant to protect confidentiality. Interviews were transcribed using the professional, confidential, third party transcriptionist service of www.Rev.com. Once transcription was complete, all participants were given a copy of their personal interview transcript via a secure email address. To improve the accuracy of the data, member checking occurred and participants had the opportunity to review their personal transcript to ensure their responses correctly reflected their experiences (Creswell, 2013; Harper & Cole, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Saldaña, 2015). During the review of their transcript, the individual could also request anything they considered to be identifiable to be revised or removed.

**Data storage.** All audiotapes were destroyed following transcription of the interviews. All electronic recordings, transcripts or other data files were encrypted and password protected. All electronic data stored on the researcher’s USB flash drive and personal external hard drive have remained untouched and kept in a locked safe in the home of the researcher.

Any written documents were kept in a locked safe at the home of the researcher during the period when the investigation was taking place. After the thesis project was completed, all hard-copy materials containing confidential interviewee information were destroyed. The Informed Consent Forms, per IRB requirements, will be destroyed three years following the completion of the study. Only the Principal Investigator (Dr. Rashid Mosley) and the Student Researcher (Nicholas Glab) had access to the files, should there have been or still exists a need.

**Data Analysis**
The data collected in this study was analyzed to describe the experiences of teacher leaders interacting with their colleagues in a distributed model of leadership. Within the analysis process, the data was coded to create clusters of themes; a code is a word or short phrase that is used to represent an idea from interview data. Codes are used to summarize, distil or condense data (Saldaña, 2015). These words or short phrases that captured the essence of the data allowed the researcher to cluster the essential elements. The analysis of a descriptive case study involves a detailed description of the context of the study as well as an analysis of the data collected to find themes (Creswell, 2014).

The semi-structured interview data was analyzed using a three-phase process: pre-coding, first cycle coding, and second cycle coding (Saldaña, 2015). In each phase of the data analysis, the researcher purposefully viewed the data through the lens of Weick’s (1995) theory of sensemaking and the research questions that were established based on a distributed model of leadership. The researcher used a software called “NVivo” to facilitate the analysis process. The following subsections will describe each phase of data analysis in greater detail.

**Pre-coding.** This first phase in the data analysis is where the researcher begins to make sense of the data from the semi-structured interviews. This researcher reviewed the written transcripts and the audio recordings of the interviews in search of information that was perceived as significant. Creswell (2013) recommended reading the transcripts in their entirety several times prior to beginning the coding process. The researcher used highlighting to mark these areas (Saldaña, 2015). This process of pre-coding allowed the researcher to develop provisional categories, themes, and relationships before the first cycle of coding began (Maxwell, 2013). As the researcher performed the pre-coding process, thoughts and ideas were recorded in the form of
memos. Memos allowed the researcher to begin to document his thought process regarding the data.

**First cycle coding.** The researcher used descriptive coding during the first cycle of coding. Descriptive coding uses words or short phrases in order to label sections from the transcripts (Saldaña, 2015). This process provided the researcher with the opportunity to begin labeling ideas which were later analyzed to find patterns and themes in the data. The researcher also used NVivo Coding in order to capture direct quotations from the participants and use their exact language as part of the further analysis. NVivo helps to maintain the voice and perspective of the participants without any interference from the researcher’s interpretation (Saldaña 2015).

**Second cycle coding.** During the second cycle of coding, the researcher analyzed the codes from the first cycle for each interview question. Pattern coding was used to develop major themes that reflected the overall data. This process led the researcher to begin finding patterns in the data. Similar answers were grouped together. The researcher organized these patterns to create categories, themes, or concepts that accurately represented groups of similar first cycle codes (Saldaña, 2015). Pattern coding takes the numerous codes from the data and reduces them into a smaller set of themes. The researcher assigned a label to these sets that represented the shared characteristics of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Three levels of data were established during the coding process: themes, subthemes, and data sets. While coding progressed from themes to subthemes to data sets, the data was narrowed from general to more specific, respectively. As the researcher created labels, the language from the research questions was used. Pattern coding allowed the researcher to review and analyze the data in a simpler format, making it easier to develop accurate themes and findings. Once the final codes were established, the researcher reviewed the findings to ensure
alignment with the original research questions (Saldaña, 2015). The common themes that arose described the experiences of teacher leaders interacting with colleagues within a distributed model of leadership.

**Ethical Considerations**

Throughout this study, the researcher observed ethical principles and followed measures to decrease any participant concerns. All participants were treated in accordance with ethical research principles and the guidelines of the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board (IRB). While there were no known significant risks involved; safeguards were employed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality along with other ethical considerations as expressed below.

The researcher followed the direction and steps provided by Yin (2011) to protect human subjects and maintain research ethics. To maintain ethical standards, this researcher was straightforward, respectful, and avoided any distortion of the research study. The study site location was kept confidential to protect the participants in the study. Although, it is notable that in case study research, anonymity may be impossible to completely guarantee as unique cases and participants are typically selected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). To uphold ethical standards, identifiable information was altered in order to protect confidentiality and recordings and data were labeled with pseudonyms. Any recognizable information that could not be altered will remain confidential and will not ever be shared with others. No reports or publications will use information that can identify the participants in any way.

To ensure valid informed consent by the participants, the researcher gave ample, clear, and thorough information in the consent process (Creswell, 2015b; Fraenkel et al., 2015). Prior to the interview process, confidentiality information was provided to all participants, both verbally and in the writing (Consent Form Appendix E). Participants were informed that
partaking in the study was voluntary, and their participation or non-participation would in no way affect other relationships (e.g., employer, school, etc.). The participants were informed that they could discontinue their commitment in the research study at any time without penalty or costs of any nature, character, or kind.

All audiotapes were destroyed following transcription of the interviews. All electronic recordings, transcripts or other data files were encrypted and password protected. Only the Principal Investigator (Dr. Rashid Mosley) and the Student Researcher (Nicholas Glab) have had access to the files.

Any written documents were kept in the locked safe at the home of the researcher during the period when the investigation was taking place. After the thesis project was completed, any hard-copy materials containing confidential interviewee information were destroyed. All electronic data stored on the student researcher’s USB flash drive and personal external hard drive remained untouched and kept in a locked safe in the home of the researcher. Any remaining data and documents will be destroyed upon filing this dissertation; informed consent forms, per IRB stipulations, will be destroyed three years following the completion of the study.

Credibility

Credibility of the findings of a study is a critical component in any research to boost trustworthiness and influence the reader that a study is valuable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Researchers often question the capability of qualitative research to provide an accurate depiction of the phenomenon under study (Shenton, 2004). Therefore, the researcher put processes into place to maintain the credibility of the study and enhance the possible transferability of the study to another setting.
While all research studies work to uphold valid and reliable results; in qualitative research, these terms have different meanings (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative studies embrace having adequate evidence so readers can verify the trustworthiness of the results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In qualitative research, validity is determined based on how confident the researcher is in the truth of the findings or credibility (Creswell, 2013). Reliability is judged as the consistency of the data collection and analysis processes, otherwise known as dependability (Creswell, 2013). In other words, it must be illustrated that the results are consistent with the data collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

To safeguard the credibility of the study, the researcher used reputable research methods and was careful to follow established case study procedures (Yin, 2014). Creswell (2013) noted eight strategies to ensure credibility in qualitative research and recommended employing a minimum of two tactics in any study. The researcher utilized three credibility methods that Creswell (2013) identified: he clarified researcher bias, he performed member checking, and he used rich, thick description to allow readers to make decisions about transferability. The researcher used additional methods to confirm credibility beyond those Creswell (2013); these are noted and fully explained below.

**Credibility of data collection process.** Refining the interview technique and questions used for data collection is a means to strengthen reliability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The interview questions were designed as open-ended questions and created with neutrality to not suggest a particular response. The interview questions were checked for readability and clarity by three colleagues; feedback was obtained and revisions were made. The researcher then used the revised questions to perform a mock interview with a colleague who had similarities to the participants (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). This mock interview was videotaped, with permission,
and the researcher thoughtfully critiqued his interview technique to ensure the interview process was comfortable and his language, vocal tones, and nonverbal communication were neutral. The interviewee offered additional feedback to the researcher for further revisions. Interview questions were then updated for clarity or edited to trigger a greater depth of responses (Creswell, 2014).

To ensure credibility during the actual interview, the researcher worked to establish trust with the participants by providing a document that outlined participant confidentiality. The influence of the researcher on the setting or participants, described as reactivity, can be a threat to credibility (Maxwell, 2013). To diminish reactivity, the researcher repeatedly guaranteed the participants that partaking in the study was completely voluntary and that the participants had the right to refuse to answer any question in the interview and to withdraw at any time, without any negative consequences.

In alignment with the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm, the researcher was a partner in the interview process through a reflective two-sided dialogue which revealed the teachers’ authentic perspectives (Ponterotto, 2005). During the interview process, he strove to create an environment where real, meaningful conversations would occur. In this study, the validity of the participants responses was potentially deepened as the researcher had previously established a trusting relationship with the teacher leaders (King, 1994).

The interviews were audio-recorded to maintain the integrity of comments as they were captured, which assured impartiality, improved accuracy, and thus supported validity (Fraenkel et al., 2015). To ensure truth in the findings, member checking was used to confirm accuracy and true meanings of the interviews (Creswell, 2013; Harper & Cole, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Saldana, 2015; Shenton, 2004). The participants commented on
their personal transcripts, and they had the chance to remove anything the individual considered to be violating their confidentiality, before the transcripts were finalized.

**Credibility and controlling researcher bias.** To prevent personal bias from entering the interview process, the researcher engaged in thoughtful self-monitoring to prevent concerns (Machi & McEvoy, 2012). During the interview process, the researcher bracketed to increased his self-awareness and recognize that his understanding of the communication with the participants was influenced by his personal background and cultural experiences as an educator and administrator (Creswell, 2013; Ponterotto, 2005). To increase dependability when bracketing, the researcher created very detailed field notes of his assumptions (Gibbs, 2007). This process improved data collection, the findings, and interpretations.

As the researcher thoughtfully and nonjudgmentally listened to each participant, he deepened his own self-perceptions to focus on a personal analysis of what he was experiencing. This self-monitoring process aided the researcher to be conscious of his attitude, to his responses, and to the participants’ perceptions of him. Ultimately, this assisted the researcher in obtaining a deeper understanding of the participants’ reflections; he consistently avoided imposing his personal meanings onto their responses. This use of bracketing and self-checking assisted in controlling biases and assumptions; it simultaneously built trustworthiness (Creswell, 2013, 2015; Shenton, 2004).

**Credibility of data analysis.** The researcher was cognizant to complete the data analysis objectively. This data analysis was accomplished with a strong, conscious effort to avoid any assumptions, biases or personal inferences. Furthermore, the researcher actually searched for data that contradicted his personal biases to ensure that he was not simply looking for data that supported his viewpoint (Maxwell, 2013; Yin, 2014).
Evidence collected from the interviews led to the identification of fruitful, productive teacher leaders’ perceptions. During the data analysis, the researcher performed a constant comparative process. Categories became less general and more specific as data was grouped or regrouped. Through analysis of the data, the researcher discovered patterns or clusters of data; which served to support the study’s credibility as common themes unfolded. The outcome of this process provided thick, rich, in-depth explanations of the phenomenon under study and an understanding of the research question, which improved credibility (Creswell, 2013).

**Transferability**

It was the goal of this researcher that the findings could be transferred to other settings or be applicable in other contexts. Throughout the research process, the researcher was conscientious to take the steps needed to attempt the assurance of transferability. To facilitate transferability to similar situations and populations, the researcher sought to illuminate the phenomenon, with thoroughness and accuracy, throughout the process. In the interview process, the researcher was attentive to both verbal and nonverbal communication to ensure clarifying questions were asked and accurate data was collected. Each participant interview was examined for similarities and differences to create thick descriptions and themes from which conclusions emerged. The thick descriptions produced from the findings will help readers to determine if the findings can be transferred to their context (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The researcher took steps to authentically explain his biases. This accurate self-disclosure of personal predispositions will allow others to understand how these biases might impact the study. This authentic self-reflection will enable others to assess transferability to their setting (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).
**Internal Audit**

For data to be trustworthy, it must be confirmable by others (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For quality assurance, the researcher worked to leave a trail of evidence for others to clearly validate the steps taken in the study. Therefore, an internal audit was maintained to demonstrate that the findings were a direct result of evidence collected and not influenced by bias (Shenton, 2004).

To allow others to follow the chain of evidence that led to the final report, all electronic recordings, transcripts, field notes or other data files were retained during the course of the study. All written documents were kept in a locked safe at the home of the researcher during the period when the investigation was taking place. All electronic recordings, transcripts, field notes, or other data files have been kept in a locked safe in the home of the researcher and have been or will be destroyed at the appropriate time. Specific documents, as required by the Northeastern University IRB stipulations, will be destroyed three years following the completion of the study.

**Self-reflexivity and Transparency**

The researcher’s solitary investment in performing the study was to develop an understanding of the teacher leader role and their perceptions. Despite this, it is recognized that researchers bring personal values, opinions, and expectations to a study, which could influence the study’s findings (Creswell, 2014). Study results that are built on the rich descriptions collected from participants and the results of actual data gathered are likely to be free from researcher bias (Yin, 2011). The researcher built this study on the evidence collected to decrease researcher bias (Yin, 2011).

Throughout the research process, the researcher maintained a self-awareness of how he was personally impacting the data collection process. The researcher was attentive to remain objective and perform the interviews with a nonjudgmental and accepting attitude. The
researcher also maintained field notes to improve the credibility of the discoveries (Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2015). The researcher worked to avoid the validation of any predispositions and attempted to find evidence to oppose his previous perceptions, thus reducing bias (Maxwell, 2013; Yin, 2009).

To further decrease the risk of researcher bias impacting the study credibility, the researcher has included below documentation of any possible personal biases; he explains how he managed this. By recognizing and reflecting upon this bias, the researcher actively worked to minimize its influence (Machi & McEvoy, 2012; Maxwell, 2013). This self-disclosure of personal biases is represented in the positionality statement.

**Positionality Statement**

**Upbringing.** I must look deep into my past in order to understand what about me might influence my perceptions regarding this study. Growing up in the Midwest, my mother often used phrases like, “many hands make light work,” “cooperation is the name of the game,” and “two minds are better than one.” Although I didn’t realize it at the time, such phrases had a tremendous impact on how I see the world and interact with others. Finding ways to help out, working as a team, and seeking input from others are all philosophies that I live by each day. As I study distributed leadership, it has become increasingly apparent to me that I am aware that not everyone has this pattern of thinking engrained in his or her background. The experience of others while collaborating may not be as positive as I perceive it to be.

My upbringing as a White, middle-class male has shaped who I am; this positionality influences my personal biases. It is a great challenge to eliminate a researcher’s identity and bias (Larabee, 2003). By recognizing these aspects of my perspective, I am better able to protect my study from them.
**Work experience.** I began my career began as a first-grade teacher in Fontana, California. Just a year into my career, I was appointed to a teacher leadership position as the school-wide Intervention Coordinator. This led to being recognized as “Teacher of the Year” for the district and, in turn, I was motivated to assume further teacher leadership positions. After moving to Cartagena, Colombia, it was only a matter of weeks before I assumed the role of student mediation advisor and a few months later, I became the Elementary Lead Teacher. Almost my entire teaching career was spent sharing leadership strategies and practices with the administration. My experience in these teacher leadership positions has pros and cons when looking at my positionality. On one hand, these experiences allow me to empathize and better understand the complexities of teacher leadership while balancing the workload of the classroom. On the other hand, my successes in those roles, may limit the empathy I have for teacher leaders, since I may unconsciously diminish any struggles that are expressed. Viewing the participants as “co-participants” instead of objects of the study allowed me to co-create understandings of the data collected, as a process we experienced together (Briscoe, 2005).

**Tenure at Colegio Jorge Washington.** I have been working at Colegio Jorge Washington for the past 10 years. My immediate supervisor, the school director, allows great freedom in my practice. This has allowed me to develop programs and a leadership model that I believe is the best fit for our school. This is the only school where I have served as a principal. I have not had the experience of implementing distributed leadership in other school contexts. This may be a limitation in my understanding of distributed leadership.

**Developing a distributed leadership model.** Upon assuming the role of Elementary Principal, I quickly learned that I could not do it all alone. I truly needed a team of professionals to share the workload and lead our school toward our mission and goals. The implementation of
distributed leadership occurred over the course of six years. It began with a couple of general leadership positions and eventually evolved into a team of five teacher leaders, divided by subject-area, that assist in the selection, planning, and implementation of our academic programs. I have witnessed first-hand the ability of distributed leadership to have a positive impact on productivity and school effectiveness. This personal experience brings out a bias in me that I must be aware of. I have a vested interest in receiving affirmation through my research supporting my assumptions and observations that the current model of leadership is the “right” thing to do.

**Researcher’s current role.** Although I have extensive experience as a teacher leader, I have now been out of the classroom because I had been serving as the elementary principal for nine years before this study was conducted. No matter how hard I try to stay current in my teaching, there is an inevitable disconnect that sets in after a number of years without teaching. My perceived recollection of what it was like to be a teacher or a teacher leader may be different than what my experience was actually like.

As the elementary principal in the role of participant observer, there is certainly risk for bias to emerge regarding leadership in the elementary school setting. I was no longer fully immersed as a colleague in the interactions between teacher leaders and followers when this study was conducted. My conceptions or misconceptions of those interactions are based on the comments provided to me by teachers. As I enter into this study, I must be aware of those preconceived notions and remain open to discovering new ones.

Roulston and Shelton (2015) provided research-based strategies on how to isolate personal bias and preserve a neutral position as a researcher. Reflective practice is one of those strategies. It is an ongoing process that requires patience, honesty, transparency, and self-control.
I was fully committed to ongoing reflective practice while conducting this research study in order to ensure authentic and valid results.

**Limitations**

This study addressed the research question of the perceptions of formal teacher leaders and how they make sense of their experiences interacting with their colleagues, within a distributed leadership model, in the context of an international school. There are several limitations in the findings based on the nature of the research design. These limitations are disclosed in the ensuing text.

After a thorough literature review, the choice of the theoretical framework of sensemaking was appropriate for this study because the use of this specific framework had the potential to limit comparison to other research. The teacher leader definition used to select the participants inherently involves the possibility in that this study might be limited in comparisons to other studies.

The research study method, a qualitative descriptive case study is another limitation. As defined, a case study is a descriptive approach rather than an explanatory project (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). With this case study approach, the data was not fully triangulated, which may be seen as decreasing the validity. In addition, the inherent design and the small sample size of six participants does not lead to easily generalizing the findings to other settings or populations.

This case study approach also had the possibility of bringing forth the researcher’s bias. The researcher is employed as an administrator within the setting studied. To safeguard credibility, measures such as member checking, bracketing, and development of thick descriptions were practiced. It is also important to note that there is a possibility that the
perspective of someone who understands the context might be able to provide deeper insight into the data (King, 1994).

This study was limited to one geographical location, an international school, and the themes and findings are based upon the context of the study and therefore not necessarily generalizable beyond the sample. The fact that it was an international school, with its cultural context, may have impacted the findings as it provided a perspective from participants’ lived experiences abroad. The perspectives from these specific participants may not be transferable to other settings.

The purposive sampling which targeted the teacher leaders provided detailed insight to the phenomena under study; however, the results may not be representative of a larger population of those engaged in distributed leadership (Maxwell, 2013). The professional development strategies used to implement this new distributed leadership model and teacher leader role may have prompted an openness to the process. The consistency of the training may also have contributed to how the teacher leaders made sense of the experience.

The teacher leaders studied began their role at the setting within the six years prior to when this study was conducted in 2017-2018; indeed, the model adopted represented a new initiative at the school at the time. Additional longitudinal research would allow for an assessment of changes in perspectives, which is beyond the scope of this study. Additional research is needed to investigate other settings with more experience in teacher leaders.

In this study, the researcher worked to create thick descriptions so the readers could determine which insights or conclusions could transfer to their setting. It is apparent that further research is needed to confirm and broaden the conclusions that resulted from this study.
Additional information on specific future research, that is needed, will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5.

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented information on the research approach, participants, procedures, data analysis, criteria for quality research and limitations. This information was presented to allow the reader the opportunity to gauge the credibility of this study and potentially easily replicate it. The study results and the themes that emerge from the data analysis will be specified in the next chapter.
Chapter 4: Results

Review of Purpose

In light of the purpose of this study and considering the theoretical framework of sensemaking and distributed leadership, a qualitative methodology was selected and semi-structured personal interviews were conducted. The teacher leaders interviewed provided an enlightening picture of their perceptions of the participants’ interactions and their relationships with their colleagues through their reported understandings and sensemaking. This chapter describes the data the researcher assembled throughout this qualitative descriptive case study. The central themes derived from the coding and analysis of interview data are presented.

Research problem, purpose, and questions. Similar to private schools in the United States, private international schools do not have a district office; therefore, major curriculum and instruction decisions are made by the principal. For principals to successfully manage their workload, many individuals who are in charge of international schools utilize a distributed leadership model that entrusts teachers with important aspects of leadership. As this leadership model increases in popularity, it is essential to understand how teacher leaders describe their interactions with colleagues within a distributed leadership model in order to effectively support them.

Therefore, the purpose of this descriptive case study was to understand how teacher leaders described their experiences interacting with their colleagues within a distributed leadership model in the context of an international school. Additionally, this study sought to understand how teacher leaders described their relationship with colleagues as they made sense of their interactions. Overall this study intended to produce results to inform and enable
administrators to better understand how teacher leaders describe their interactions with colleagues in order to improve support for teacher leaders.

The following research questions were structured to explore and better understand the phenomena under study. The central research question that guided the study’s direction was: How do teacher leaders make sense of their interactions with colleagues within the context of a distributed leadership model in an international school? The sub-question was: How do teacher leaders describe their relationships with colleagues as they make sense of their interactions within the context of a distributed leadership model in an international school?

The first research question aimed to focus on the interactions of teacher leaders and colleagues. Interactions create relationships. Common ground and social connections or interactions create the social bonds of relationships. Therefore, the first research question was expected to inform the second sub-question regarding the relationships that developed. In addition, the last several questions in the participants’ interviews specifically addressed the relationship aspect of the teacher leaders and followers. By answering the dominant research question regarding the interactions of the teacher leaders and followers, insights to the nature of the relationship were discovered.

**Analysis alignment with research design and tradition.** It was Yin’s (2014) case study procedures that provided direction to the research process. These case study procedures provided an in-depth investigation of perceptions of teacher leaders and their interactions with colleagues. Weick’s (1995) sensemaking framework, within a bounded context of a distributed leadership model in an international school, steered the study to obtain the thick descriptive evidence needed to answer the research questions. The semi-structured interview questions were created under the guidance of Weick’s (1995) sensemaking framework to elicit the essential
feedback needed to inform the research questions and better understand how teacher leaders make sense of their interactions with their colleagues. The connection of Weick’s seven characteristics to the creation of the research questions is illustrated in Appendix G.

All of the evidence was analyzed through the lenses of sensemaking and then connected back to the research questions for interpretation and to find meaning. A thematic analysis of the qualitative data was conducted. The process of coding and data analysis was based on the nature of the study and the necessity to answer the research questions. Any personal biases were closely monitored and the researcher purposively aimed to find data that opposed any biases.

During the coding process, the researcher read and thought about the data to make sense of it. The data was explored for contrasts and similarities to investigate connections or relationships between codes. When saturation of coding was achieved, descriptive themes and subthemes were developed. Through this condensation process of establishing categories or themes, the data became more meaningful, which allowed the researcher to more deeply grasp the phenomenon (Saldaña, 2015). The data themes were reviewed to identify possible insight to attempt to answer the research questions.

To protect the confidentiality of the participants, the researcher opted to not associate direct quotes with a specific pseudonym. It is important to note that it was through an established trusted working relationship between the researcher and the teacher leaders that this study was possible. The teacher leaders were very forthcoming in providing their time to freely to discuss their insights, which contributed to the robust descriptive results. In the spirit of that trusted relationship, the researcher desires to make every effort to protect the participants and guard their confidentiality.
The research results are organized by theme and presented in Table and Figure format to ease readability and enhance clarity. The significant data is noted as it relates to each subtheme. Following the results, an analysis of the themes that emerged is presented and further described.

**Contextual Background**

Colegio Jorge Washington is a private, non-profit, non-denominational, co-educational, N-12 international college-preparatory school offering American and Colombian diplomas. It is accredited by AdvancED and the Colombian Ministry of Education. The school was founded in 1952 in Cartagena, Colombia. It is one of two official U.S. State Department overseas schools in Colombia. School-wide enrollment at the time this study was conducted was 800 students, representing an array of nationalities.

The school, at the time of this study, had experienced an increase in responsibilities and pressures for curriculum development, resource management, and professional development. The lack of a central office and its personnel to handle these types of responsibilities was one reason the school administration had found it challenging to keep up with these demands. In response to these challenges, the leadership model was restructured to include distributed leadership. A team of professionals needed to share the workload and lead the school toward its mission and goals. Therefore, over the course of a six-year period, the model of distributed leadership was implemented.

Implementation of distributed leadership began in June of 2012 with the announcement of three new leadership positions for the following school year. One leadership position was needed for each of three areas taught by homeroom teachers: Math, Science, and English Language Arts. These positions were strategically selected as a way of vertically and horizontally aligning all 12 homeroom teachers in each of these subject areas. New curricula and
programs had been adopted for these subjects, but the follow-through on implementation was inconsistent. Also, many resources/materials were needed to fully implement the curricula, which required detailed and consistent attention in each classroom. These teacher leaders provided the support and guidance needed for all 12 homeroom teachers to successfully and consistently teach the newly implemented changes within these core subjects.

Upon announcing the three new leadership positions, a Lead Teacher Application Form was emailed to the teaching faculty. The Lead Teacher Application Form can be found in Appendix H. Teachers who were interested filled out the application form, and the elementary principal followed-up with each candidate individually to discuss the opportunity in more detail. The application form clearly defines the purpose of the Lead Teacher position: “To use a Distributed Leadership model to assist in the full implementation of adopted elementary programs.”

To facilitate a clear understanding of the expectations for the position, the roles and responsibilities were listed in detail on the application. These roles and responsibilities include:

- Develop understanding of how program looks at grades 1-5
- Be point person for staff regarding resource needs and assist in organization of program materials
- Seek out new online resources for teachers
- Identify professional development needs to help implement the program
- Model the usage of common planning templates for the subject area
- Collaborate in development of cross-curricular projects
- Assist Curriculum Coordinator in creation of agenda for curriculum days
- Academic Council Member
• Maintain positive relationships with colleagues

Six years later, the distributed leadership model had been strengthened and expanded to include other positions in the elementary school. These new positions were created in direct response to section-wide initiatives or goals from our Elementary School Improvement Plan. There are now lead teachers formally assigned for each of the following subject areas: English Language Arts, Spanish Language Arts/Colombian Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, USA Social Studies, Fine Arts, Assessment, and Standards-based Grading. All of these positions ensure alignment in the implementation of adopted programs, philosophies, and curricula.

In addition, there are several coordinator positions for the following programs: Destination ImagiNation, Student Council, and National Elementary Honor Society. A full-time Literacy Coach was also added to the faculty as a leader focused on modeling and encouraging best practices in teaching for reading, writing, and speaking/listening. Each of these roles was once part of the responsibilities of the elementary principal. Needless to say, the ability of one person to perform all of these functions at a high-quality level was deemed unrealistic.

In general, under this model, each lead teacher was receiving an additional stipend to compensate them for their extra time and dedication. The Human Resources Department asked them to sign a leadership contract at the beginning of each school year. Their stipend was received in two installments, one payment each semester. Each year, lead teachers had the option of renewing their contract as a teacher leader or stepping aside to allow someone else to lead. Most lead teachers preferred to stay in their position, which provided more consistency and momentum in their areas. When a position did become available, there was high interest from other teachers who desired to step into a leadership role.
Lead teachers in such an environment have an immense amount of autonomy and responsibility to lead their respective areas. They meet frequently with their colleagues through department meetings, grade-level meetings, and whole group professional development sessions. To provide time for this communication, every Wednesday afternoon, students are dismissed at 1:00 p.m. and teachers stay until 4:00 p.m. Those three hours were consistently at the Colegio Jorge Washington dedicated to professional development and collaborative meetings, facilitated by lead teachers.

When lead teachers at the school needed an extended time period to meet with a specific grade level, they had access to request a “Curriculum Day.” When planning a Curriculum Day, lead teachers were expected to have a specific focus in mind and to create an agenda to communicate the plan for the work session. This Curriculum Day consistently provide opportunities for staff to collaboratively plan, develop curriculum documents, unpack upcoming units, or create assessments together. Substitute teachers were consistently provided when this study was conducted to teach classes to allow the regular teachers to meet during the regular school day.

When significant decisions needed to be made for a given subject area, lead teachers under this particular model engaged in shared decision making with the elementary principal. They collaboratively discussed the situation and possible solutions together and agreed upon the best next steps. In addition, all lead teachers were meeting together periodically under an umbrella entity called the Academic Council. The Academic Council, in conjunction with the elementary principal, was endowed with the responsibility to make large-scale decisions that potentially impacted the entire elementary section.
Distributed leadership became a centerpiece in the working culture of the elementary section. The lead teacher positions were readily institutionalized into the human resources processes. Since lead teachers consistently engaged with their colleagues, teacher collaboration became a standard work practice, profoundly ingrained into the cultural academic landscape at Colegio Jorge Washington. As a result of the distributed model of leadership, the programs in the elementary section developed rapidly, and extraordinary accomplishments were made from the bottom-up. These bottom-up initiatives created long-lasting change that was being widely embraced by all faculty to improve the overall quality of education provided.

The context of an international school also has an impact on the types of relationships formed between teachers. The relationships between teachers in the context of an international school are unique due to the distinct set of circumstances surrounding them. Teachers are recruited from job fairs in the United States or through virtual interviews. Each year, a new cohort of teachers arrives the same week in late July, in the case of this particular school in Colombia. Returning foreign teachers commonly support the incoming teachers as they settle into their new lives overseas. A strong bond is formed among foreign teachers as they navigate the local culture together.

The relationships between teachers in an international school extend beyond their time on campus. They hangout on weekends, workout together, travel together, and party together. Some of them are even roommates. Since most teachers are alone overseas far away from their families and friends, they also become a support network for each another. They share in hardships and joys.

The intimate relationship between teachers in international schools is important to understand given that it shapes the findings in this study. The depth of personal connections
impacts the way in which individuals interact. Teachers in these contexts are greatly invested in their personal connections and may not want to strain those relationships for the sake of a challenging professional interaction.

The concept of seniority is also different in the context of an international school. Many teachers only stay two or three years before moving to another location or returning home again. A teacher who has been on staff for four or five years is considered a “veteran” and is referred to as being here “a long time.” When this study was conducted, there were not any teachers who had been at the school for 20+ years and who might have had the propensity to be resistant to new ideas. This high teaching faculty turnover can impact the interactions between teachers.

**Semi-structured Interview Data**

The results from this study unfolded from the outcomes of interviews with the six participants, who candidly and purposively discussed their perceptions. Within the teacher leader and colleague interactions studied, each participant needed to make sense of their interactions individually. The participants provided a fruitful portrayal of their interactions through their accounts. The researcher has merged these individual meanings through the coding and analysis process to discover common themes.

The coding and analysis of the interview data led to the development of four dominant themes. To explain the results, the researcher has opted to first present the data visually with the use of tables and figures. The researcher hoped that condensing the data into tables and figures would provide a clear, systematic description of the results. Then, an explanatory narrative of a sampling of evidence for each dominant theme has been included to tell the story of this case study. Additional significant data for each theme has been included within tables, which can be found in the Appendices.
The following explanation of results begins with the presentation of the data for each theme with tables and figures. Within the tables and figures, descriptive statistics or numbers are presented to assist the reader in understanding how prevalent a finding was. For example, the figures clearly show the number of participants who provided data for each of the themes and subthemes. The figures also illustrate the number of data points or references for each of the themes and subthemes.

The analysis of the data is clearly demonstrated in the figures provided; they summarize the frequency and strength of the data for each theme. The credibility of the results is visibly exemplified in the tables; the direct relationship of the participants’ quotations to the themes is unmistakably evident. It is apparent that sufficient evidence is provided from the data to answer the research questions.

**Dominant themes.** This case study discovered four dominate themes related to the interactions and relationships of the teacher leaders and their colleagues. These four dominant themes discovered from the evidence include: (a) *Adaptability to colleagues during interactions*; (b) *Reflective differentiated approaches to interactions*; (c) *Partners in learning and leading*; and (d) *Blending personal and professional relationships*. The themes the researcher identified are described and summarized in the figures and tables below to deliver a synopsis of the results at a glance and to ensure clarity and readability.

The first several figures illustrate the association of the data to the four dominate themes. First, the subsequent figure which is a direct extract from the NVivo software that exhibits the themes and correlating subthemes, including the number of participants represented and the number of data references that support the theme and subtheme, is presented. Next, the ensuing
Figure summarizes all of the themes and their correlating subthemes, including the weight of distribution of data to each of the themes.

Figure 1, derived from the NVivo software, displays the four dominant themes. The number of participants who contributed to the theme are noted in the column labeled as sources. The distribution of the data or the references to each of the themes and subthemes is also noted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability to Colleagues During Interactions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to Fulfill Expectations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigating Challenging Interactions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of Colleague’s Reaction During an Interaction</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humility and Vulnerability</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Differentiated Approaches to Interactions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting to Guide Future Interactions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Approaches to Support</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacting with Diverse Team Personalities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners in Learning and Leading</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Leadership</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching Relationships</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing Experiences</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Culture of Learning Together</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blending Personal and Professional Relationships</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Connections</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Relationships Lead to Increase in Interactions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1. Themes and subthemes with data sources and references from NVivo software.*

Next, Figure 2 visually displays the four dominant themes and the distribution of the data to each of the themes. Each of the four dominant themes contains approximately 20-30% of the data. So, the data is fairly equally distributed among the four themes.
The subsequent series of tables illuminates the themes and subthemes of the study with descriptions of each. The tables below also include clarifying descriptions from the researcher. The clarifying descriptions are provided to assist the reader in interpreting the results.

Table 1 illustrates the descriptions of the first theme. The table also includes a description for each of the subthemes. The combination of the subthemes contributed to the data that uncovered the first theme: *Adaptability to colleagues during interactions.*
Table 1

Overview of Theme 1 and its Subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme or Subtheme</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1: <em>Adaptability to colleagues during interactions</em></td>
<td>This theme describes the perceptions teacher leaders have as they become aware of the responses or cues of their colleagues during an interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 1.1: <em>Desire to fulfill expectations</em></td>
<td>This subtheme addresses the myriad of pressures and expectations that teacher leaders experience within their role. Throughout the interviews, there were 97 references to this subtheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 1.2: <em>Navigating challenging interactions</em></td>
<td>This subtheme illustrates some of the challenging interactions that teacher leaders have with colleagues. Throughout the interviews, there were 60 references to this subtheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 1.3: <em>Awareness of colleague’s reaction during an interaction</em></td>
<td>This subtheme describes the ability of teacher leaders to perceive the reactions of their colleagues in the midst of an interaction. Throughout the interviews, there were 40 references to this subtheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 1.4 <em>Humility and Vulnerability</em></td>
<td>This subtheme exemplifies the traits of humility and vulnerability that are demonstrated by teacher leaders during interactions with colleagues. Throughout all of the interviews, there were 32 total references to this subtheme.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 explains the descriptions of Theme 2. The table also includes a description for each of the subthemes. The blending of the subthemes contributed to the data that discovered Theme 2: *Reflective differentiated approaches to interactions.*

Table 2

Overview of Theme 2 and its Subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme or subtheme</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Theme 2: *Reflective* | This theme describes the practice of reflection that teacher leaders
differentiated approaches to interactions

Subtheme 2.1: Reflecting to guide future interactions
This subtheme focuses on the reflections that teacher leaders make in order to guide their leadership practice. Throughout the interviews, there were 59 references to this subtheme.

Subtheme 2.2: Strategic approaches to support
This subtheme uncovers the strategic approaches that teacher leaders use in order to successfully support their colleagues. Throughout the interviews, there were 53 references to this subtheme.

Subtheme 2.3: Interacting with diverse team personalities
This subtheme addresses the reality that teacher leaders interact with a team of colleagues who have diverse personalities. Throughout the interviews, there were 38 references to this subtheme.

Subtheme 2.4: Listening
This subtheme emphasizes the importance of listening as an approach to leading. Throughout the interviews, there were 22 references to this subtheme.

Table 3 illuminates the descriptions of Theme 3. The table also includes a description for each of the subthemes. The merging of the subthemes contributed to the data that exposed Theme 3, Partners in learning and leading.

Table 3

Overview of Theme 3 and its Subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme or subtheme</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3: Partners in learning and leading</td>
<td>This theme describes the relationship between teacher leaders and their colleagues as a partnership in learning and leading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 3.1: Collaborative leadership</td>
<td>This subtheme addresses the style of collaborative leadership used by teacher leaders. Throughout the interviews, there were 69 references to this subtheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 3.2: Coaching relationships</td>
<td>This subtheme focuses on the coaching relationships that teacher leaders have with their colleagues. Throughout the interviews, there were 54 references to this subtheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 3.3:</td>
<td>This subtheme describes how the relationships between teacher leaders and their colleagues as a partnership in learning and leading.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sharing experiences

Throughout the interviews, there were 32 references to this subtheme.

Subtheme 3.4: A culture of learning together

This subtheme explains the culture of learning that exists in a distributed model of leadership. Throughout the interviews, there were 26 references to this subtheme.

The following Table 4 shows the descriptions of Theme 4. The table also includes a description for each of the subthemes. The fusion of the subthemes contributed to the data that revealed Theme 4, Blending personal and professional relationships.

Table 4

Overview of Theme 4 and its Subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme or subtheme</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4: Blending personal and professional relationships</td>
<td>This theme describes the blend of both personal and professional relationships that exist between teacher leaders and their colleagues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 4.1: Trust</td>
<td>This subtheme uncovers trust as the essential ingredient in the relationships between teacher leaders and their colleagues. Throughout the interviews, there were 48 references to this subtheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 4.2: Personal connections</td>
<td>This subtheme provides data regarding the personal connections between teacher leaders and their colleagues. Throughout the interviews, there were 37 references to this subtheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 4.3: Positive relationships lead to increase in interactions</td>
<td>This subtheme illuminates that positive relationships between teacher leaders and their colleagues lead to an increase in interactions. Throughout the interviews, there were 34 references to this subtheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 4.4: Empathy</td>
<td>This subtheme reveals how teacher leaders often empathize with their colleagues. Throughout the interviews, there were 22 references to this subtheme.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Succeeding the above presentation of the themes and subthemes, the researcher has included tables and figures below to clearly exhibit the data results for each specific theme. First, there is a thematic description and additional insights from the researcher regarding the theme. This information is provided to enhance understanding and expand the reader’s insights of each theme.

After the theme description, there is a figure from the NVivo data that presents the weight of each subtheme based on the number of data references. This information, at a glance, provides insight to demonstrate the strength of the evidence for each of the subthemes. In addition, credibility is substantiated by the analysis of the data points or evidence for each of the subthemes. These figures consistently bring clarity into how each of the subthemes contributes to the creation of the theme.

**Theme 1: Adaptability to colleagues during interactions.** The first theme, *Adaptability to colleagues during interactions*, describes the perceptions teacher leaders have as they become aware of the responses or cues of their colleagues during an interaction. This theme has been divided into four subthemes: (a) *Desire to fulfill expectations*; (b) *Navigating challenging interactions*; (c) *Awareness of colleague’s reaction during an interaction*; (d) *Humility and vulnerability*. A total of 229 references related to this theme appeared throughout the interviews with all six participants. The most impactful selections from the transcripts that best represent each subtheme have been selected and presented.

Figure 3 demonstrates the weight of the data references for *Adaptability to colleagues during interactions* –Subthemes 1.1-1.4. Within Figure 3, there is NVivo data that presents the weight of each subtheme based on the number of data references. This information, at a glance, provides insight to demonstrate the strength of the evidence for each of the subthemes. In
addition, credibility is substantiated by the analysis of the data points or of evidence provided for each of the subthemes. Figure 3 brings clarity into how each of the subthemes contributes to the creation of the theme.

**Theme 1: Adaptability to Colleagues During Interactions**

This theme describes the perceptions teacher leaders have as they become aware of the responses or cues of their colleagues during an interaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subthemes 1.1-1.4</th>
<th>Number of data references</th>
<th>Percentage of weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

![Diagram showing percentages of subthemes related to adaptability to colleagues during interactions.](image)
**Desire to fulfill expectations** | 97 | 42.40%
---|---|---
**Navigating challenging interactions** | 60 | 26.20%
**Awareness of colleague’s reaction during an interaction** | 40 | 17.50%
**Humility and vulnerability** | 32 | 14.00%

*Figure 3. Weight of Subthemes 1.1-1.4 based on data references from NVivo software*

**Introduction to evidence supporting Subthemes 1.1-1.4.** Lastly, the researcher has communicated information regarding the story of this case study more descriptively. The narrative samples of the prevailing evidence supporting the first theme, *Adaptability to colleagues during interactions* are shared. This evidence, which includes a sampling of the direct quotations, supports the credibility of the study and its results.

Theme 1, *Adaptability to colleagues during interactions*, included quotes from all six participants and 229 data references. These 229 data references comprised 31.70% of all the data references uncovered within the case study. The researcher has selected some key quotes from the participants to illustrate the evidence supporting each of the subthemes for the first theme, *Adaptability to colleagues during interactions*.

**Evidence supporting Subtheme 1.1.** The data supporting Subtheme 1.1, *Desire to fulfill expectations*, is cited first. All six participants contributed to Subtheme 1.1. Within Subtheme 1.1, there were 97 data references. This data set comprised 42.40% of the data within the first theme. Subtheme 1.1 delivered 13.41% of the data references depicted within the overall case study. There were six data sets within Subtheme 1.1: *Self-imposed expectations, Desire for*
interactions to be perceived as important and worthwhile, Worries about respecting the time of colleagues, Desire for interactions to be perceived as captivating, Lack of self-confidence, and lastly, the Expectation to answer all of the questions posed by colleagues.

Some of these data sets supporting Subtheme 1.1, Desire to fulfill expectations, and these are illustrated in the following text. This comment from a teacher leader accentuates the data set, Lack of self-confidence: “You get a little bit nervous about, ‘Am I gonna clearly explain myself? Are they gonna think I'm being stupid? Am I wasting their time?’” One participant summed up the data set, Desire for interactions to be perceived as captivating, when pointing out:

I feel like sometimes teachers and even teacher leaders feel pressured to be edutainers.

Where we ... It's just got to be great and awesome and lively or it's just no good. And sometimes there is just business that's got to get done.

Another data set that found supporting Subtheme 1.1, Desire to fulfill expectations, was the data set Desire for interactions to be perceived as important and worthwhile. An example of this is found in this participant’s words, “I feel like I'm having to prove that it's important for us to be there.” Another teacher leader spoke to how the data set, Self-imposed expectations, impacts the structure of the interactions. This teacher leader explained, “I think I got nervous at first 'cause I have that role and I wanted to make sure I had everything together. And then, I also felt a little pressured to follow how others had been doing the meetings.”

Evidence supporting Subtheme 1.2. The data supporting Subtheme 1.2, Navigating challenging interactions, is exhibited next. All six participants contributed data to Subtheme 1.2. Within Subtheme 1.2, there were 60 data references. This data set comprised 26.20% of the data within the first theme. Subtheme 1.2 delivered 8.29% of the data references depicted within the overall case study. There were five data sets within Subtheme 1.2: Examples of challenging
interactions, Open communication, Don’t take it personally, Open to new ideas, and lastly, Be direct.

Some of these data sets within Subtheme 1.2, Navigating challenging interactions, are depicted in the following text. One of the teachers, within the data set Open communication, clearly articulated an understanding of the evolving process when describing:

I quickly realized that that was creating more tension than needed to be there and that this question needed to just come off the table and the next time the wagons were circled, put it back out there so I wasn't the messenger, I was the facilitator, but they had a chance to talk together. I realized I just need to communicate that more openly and everyone together.

Teacher leaders repeatedly shared comments that supported the data set, Don’t take it personally. An example of this lies within this comment, “I would say, not to take things so personally 'cause not everyone is going to respond to you the way you want to and you can't let it affect you personally.”

Additional data sets that reinforced Subtheme 1.2, Navigating challenging interactions, included Open to new ideas and the data set Be direct; these data sets are described in the following examples. One of the participants, within the data set Open to new ideas, demonstrated bridging gaps and remarked:

I was really interested in her perspective, even though it came across as like, she just put up a brick wall. And instead of trying to argue with her or say something, I just said, "Send me the research. I'd love to hear more about that.”
Another teacher leader, within the data set, *Be direct*, summarized her perception by noting, “Well, you do have to do this because these are the requirements of every homeroom teacher. Sometimes those situations are uncomfortable but ... I have had mostly good experiences.”

**Evidence supporting Subtheme 1.3.** Next, the data supporting Subtheme 1.3, *Awareness of colleague’s reaction during an interaction*, is quoted. All six participants contributed to Subtheme 1.3. Within Subtheme 1.3 there were 40 data references. This data set comprised 17.46% of the data within the first theme. Subtheme 1.3 delivered 5.53% of the data references depicted within the overall case study. There were five data sets within Subtheme 1.3: *General methods used for observing cues*, *Positive cues observed in colleagues*, *Teacher leader reaction to positive cues*, *Negative cues observed in colleagues*, and lastly, *Teacher leader reaction to negative cues*.

Some of these data sets supporting Subtheme 1.3, *Awareness of colleague’s reaction during an interaction*, are expounded upon in the following text. Within the data set, *General methods used for observing cues*, one teacher leader recognized the importance of differentiating responses by explaining:

> I'm usually trying to gauge energy level... I'm also trying to like, "How are you doing? How's the climate? Are you fading? Are people communicating? Which voices are really being active and are being more passive?" I'm trying to be a little extra observant.

In contributing to the data set, *Negative cues observed in colleagues*, a participant echoed this sentiment, “Body language has a lot to do with it. If they start to do something else, if they start to look disinterested in some way, I would try to figure out, why is this not important to them?”

Furthermore, the data sets of *Teacher leader reaction to negative cues* and *Teacher leader reaction to positive cues* also authenticated Subtheme 1.3, *Awareness of colleague’s*
reaction during an interaction. These data sets are illustrated in the succeeding text. Inside the data set, Teacher leader reaction to negative cues, a participant described the complicated human component within this role by noting this response, “Then I'm like, ‘Eh, can I finish this quicker for you? Cause you don't care.’” Within the data set, Teacher leader reaction to positive cues, one teacher leader revealed the impact of factors such as positive cues by disclosing, “It makes me more comfortable sharing, and it makes me not only more comfortable, but willing to go into more detail and engage in conversation.”

**Evidence supporting Subtheme 1.4.** The Subtheme 1.4, Humility and vulnerability, is validated with excerpts from the data next. All six participants contributed to Subtheme 1.4. Within Subtheme 1.4, there were 32 data references. This data set comprised 13.97% of the data within the Theme 1. Subtheme 1.4 delivered 4.42% of the data references depicted within the overall case study. There were three data sets within Subtheme 1.4: Facilitator role instead of heroic leader, Humility, and lastly, Courage to be vulnerable.

The data sets supporting Subtheme 1.4, Humility and vulnerability, are exhibited in the following text. The excerpts found with the data set, Facilitator role instead of heroic leader, unveiled the core role of the teacher leaders. In sum, one teacher eloquently noted:

My leadership position is just being the person to organize. We're all on the exact same level. I am just the one who's kind of like, "Okay, this is our topic. Let's talk." I'm the introducer. I'm the one who takes notes; but I wouldn't say that I'm above anyone.

The sentiment of the importance of being humble was exposed within the Humility data set. As one participant shared, “I don't think that you can just walk in and feel like you know more than everybody else or feel like you're there to fix anybody's teaching.”

The data set Courage to be vulnerable also substantiates the Subtheme 1.4, Humility and vulnerability. …
vulnerability, and is be portrayed next. Inside the quotes found in the data set, *Courage to be vulnerable*, the human component of the interactions between teacher leaders and their colleagues was prominent. For example, one teacher emphasized:

You have to be a little bit brave, too. You have to be able to crack yourself open and be vulnerable with people and be willing to co-teach or want to teach in front of them, even though you know that it won't ever be perfect.

Within Appendix I, the researcher has encapsulated additional significant direct data quotations for each of the subthemes within Theme 1, Adaptability to colleagues during interactions. The table, with the direct data quotations, demonstrates the credibility of the results. The additional direct data quotes also validate the resulting Theme 1, Adaptability to colleagues during interactions, that emerged.

**Theme 2: Reflective differentiated approaches to interactions.** The second theme, *Reflective differentiated approaches to interactions*, includes illuminating notes from the researcher. The notes are provided to assist the reader in interpreting the results. Theme 2 describes the practice of reflection that teacher leaders use to guide their strategic approaches to the varied personalities of their colleagues. The teacher leaders responded with differentiated interactions, based on their reflections of each individual colleague.

This theme has been divided into three subthemes: (a) *Reflecting to guide future interactions*, (b) *Strategic approaches to support*, (c) *Interacting with diverse team personalities*, (d) *Listening*. A total of 172 references to this theme appeared throughout all six interviews. Below, the most impactful selections from the transcripts that best represent each subtheme are presented.
Figure 4 demonstrates the weight of the data references for *Reflective differentiated approaches* Subthemes 2.1-2.4. Within Figure 4, there is NVivo data that presents the weight of each subtheme based on the number of data references. This information, at a glance, provides insight to demonstrate the strength of the evidence for each of the subthemes. In addition, credibility is substantiated by the analysis of the data points or evidence to each of the subthemes. This figure brings clarity regarding how each of the subthemes contributes to the creation of the theme.

**Theme 2: Reflective Differentiated Approaches to Interactions**

*This theme describes the practice of reflection that teacher leaders use to guide their strategic approaches to the varied personalities of their colleagues.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 2: Reflective differentiated approaches to interactions</th>
<th>Number of data references</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Approaches to Support</td>
<td></td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacting with Diverse Team Personalities</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4: Pie chart showing the weight of data references for Theme 2: Reflective Differentiated Approaches to Interactions.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic approaches to support</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interacting with diverse team personalities</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>22.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12.80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Weight of Subthemes 2.1-2.4 based on data references from NVivo software

**Introduction to evidence supporting Subthemes 2.1-2.4.** To conclude Theme 2, *Reflective differentiated approaches to interactions*, the researcher is communicating communicate evidence regarding the story of this case study more descriptively. The narrative appraisals of the dominant evidence supporting Theme 2, Adaptability to colleagues during interactions, will be revealed. This evidence, which includes a sampling of the direct quotations, demonstrates the credibility of the study and its results.

Theme 2, *Reflective differentiated approaches to interactions*, included quotes from all six participants and 172 data references. These 172 data references, from Theme 2, comprised 23.80% of the all the data references uncovered within the case study. The researcher has selected some key quotes from the participants to illustrate the evidence supporting each of the subthemes for Theme 2, *Reflective differentiated approaches to interactions*.

**Evidence supporting Subtheme 2.1.** The data supporting Subtheme 2.1, *Reflecting to guide future interactions*, will be substantiated next. All six participants contributed to Subtheme 2.1. Within Subtheme 2.1 there were 59 data references. This data set comprised 34.30% of the data within Theme 2. Subtheme 2.1 delivered 8.16% of the data references depicted within the overall case study. There were three data sets within Subtheme 2.1: *Asking colleagues for feedback, Seeking to understand root*, and *Self-reflections.*
Some of these data sets supporting Subtheme 2.1, *Reflecting to guide future interactions*, are enlightened in the following text. The insights obtained within the data set, *Asking colleagues for feedback*, echoed the common desire to obtain the reactions of colleagues. One teacher leader emphasized:

I always love to hear feedback. Whatever it is, constructive, positive, definitely some eagerness to know like, ‘What's the next step? How did we do today? Are people feeling like they got some resolution to questions they had? Are there lingering questions? Was that an ungodly waste of time? What's the climate, how are people feeling?

The additional data set, *Seeking to understand root* also reinforces Subtheme 2.1, *Reflecting to guide future interactions*, and is described in the following examples. Perceptions found within the data set, *Seeking to understand root*, included the participants characteristically expressing comments regarding a search to grasp an understanding of the origin of people’s tendency to avoid change. In speaking of this, one teacher leader stated:

Okay, take a step back. What is it that they're worried about? What is it that they're pulling away about?" And then figure out, maybe they need more support. Maybe there's something that we need to change in this so that they're not feeling frustrated or overwhelmed or like it's wasting their time or whatever.

Another teacher reiterated this statement within the data set, *Seeking to understand root*, by noting:

Generally, people have an opinion based on something, based on a previous experience, based on a fear, but it's coming from somewhere, so really trying to figure out where that's coming from, why they have that opinion or why they have that concern, whatever, and then going from there, instead of just making a judgment right away. “Okay, what's
actually going on here? What's the root of this?” Then, you can work to solve that problem.

*Evidence supporting Subtheme 2.2.* The data supporting Subtheme 2.2, *Strategic approaches* to support, is outlined in detail next. All six participants contributed to Subtheme 2.2. Within Subtheme 2.2, there were 53 data references. This data set comprised 30.81% of the data within Theme 2. Subtheme 2.2 delivered 7.33% of the data references depicted within the overall case study. There were three data sets within Subtheme 2.2: *Assessing colleagues’ needs, Providing purpose,* and *Subtle strategies.*

The data sets supporting Subtheme 2.2, *Strategic approaches to support,* are revealed in the following text. Amidst the data set, *Providing purpose,* one participant noted the need to take time in focusing on purpose, recommending, “I wanna stop it and then bring them back to what the purpose is. Sometimes people have other things; people are not engaged in the purpose maybe.” Within the data set, *Assessing colleagues’ needs,* one teacher leader focused on the necessity to better understand needs when advising: “Find out where people are coming from and what they really need. So, do they need something just taken care of really quickly? Do they need to understand something better? So, I think really figuring out what teachers need.”

An additional data set, *Subtle strategies,* also reinforced Subtheme 2.2, *Strategic approaches to support;* it is illustrated in the succeeding text. Inside the data set of *Subtle strategies,* a teacher leader cautioned:

I think I’ve learned that there are some conversations that you have as a team and there are some conversations that you have one-on-one. And which people you have those conversations with… and when you need to know when you need to talk to your boss about things that you should know before you talk to the team or certain individuals.
Evidence supporting Subtheme 2.3. The data supporting Subtheme 2.3, Interacting with diverse team personalities, is authenticated next. All six participants contributed to Subtheme 2.3. Within Subtheme 2.3, there were 38 data references. This data set comprised 22.09% of the data within Theme w. Subtheme 2.3 delivered 5.25% of the data references depicted within the overall case study. There were three data sets within Subtheme 2.3: Reflecting on colleagues’ personalities and background, Experiences interacting with outspoken colleagues, and Experiences interacting with timid colleagues.

The data sets supporting Subtheme 2.3, Interacting with diverse team personalities, are documented in the following text. One teacher leader showed appreciation of individual diversity within the data set, Reflecting on colleagues’ personalities and background. The participant noted:

Just be flexible in the way you interact with people. You just need to be flexible. You need to be able to interact with different people differently and the way that they need you to interact with them and what they want from you.

Within the data set, Reflecting on colleagues’ personalities and background, another participant explained, “I would say, I generally try to adjust to who I'm talking to.”

Other data sets found supporting Subtheme 2.3, Interacting with diverse team personalities, will be expounded upon next. These data sets include Experiences interacting with timid colleagues and Experiences interacting with outspoken colleagues. The complexities of the communication process were described in the data set, Experiences interacting with timid colleagues. One participant shared the experience and challenges of interactions with timid individuals, commenting:
But if someone is a little bit quieter, I might ask 'em some questions and kind of dig a little bit more; to figure out what they're actually thinking instead of just filling the space with my own speech, trying to figure out what they're actually thinking if they're not volunteering those ideas.

Amid the data set, *Experiences interacting with outspoken colleagues* some challenges were revealed as a teacher leader explained the use of mirroring responses, “If someone tends to be more outgoing and more vocal with their opinions, then I'll be more vocal also.”

**Evidence supporting Subtheme 2.4.** The data supporting Subtheme 2.4, *Listening*, is certified next. All six participants contributed to Subtheme 2.4. Within Subtheme 2.4, there were 22 data references. This data set comprised 12.79% of the data within Theme 2. Subtheme 2.4 delivered 3.04% of the data references depicted within the overall case study. There were two data sets within Subtheme 2.4: *Providing opportunities for teachers to be heard and leading by listening*.

The data sets supporting Subtheme 2.4, *Listening*, are represented in the following text. One teacher leader explained an important lesson within the data set *Providing opportunities for teachers to be heard*. The participant spoke of communication needs of colleagues when noting, “If you're going to be a teacher leader, just one of the most important lessons that I've ever taken away is that teachers really want to feel heard.” Also found within the data set, *Providing opportunities for teachers to be heard*, another participant supported this same idea when revealing, “I think, having lots of ways for people to voice their opinions, and get things out that they need to talk about or figure out.”

Another data set, *Leading by listening*, also substantiated Subtheme 2.4, *Listening* and is portrayed in the following text. One picture that was painted across interviews was found within
the data set *Leading by listening*. The necessity of listening was relayed by one participant with this comment, “You also have to not be attached to any particular outcome, but you're like ... just sort of surrender and listen. You really have to listen, I would say. Like actively listen, which isn't always easy.” Another participant reaffirmed this within the data set, *Leading by listening*, when responding, “Everyone has valuable ideas, and if you actually listen to them all, it elevates the product you're creating.”

Within Appendix J, the researcher has summarized further significant direct data quotations for each of the subthemes within Theme 2, *Reflective differentiated approaches to interactions*. This additional data, found within a table in Appendix J, includes the direct data quotations which further demonstrates the credibility of the results. The additional direct data quotes also validate the resulting Theme 2, *Reflective differentiated approaches to interactions* that emerged.

**Theme 3: Partners in learning and leading.** The third theme, *Partners in learning and leading*, describes the relationship between teacher leaders and their colleagues as a partnership in learning and leading. This theme has been divided into four subthemes: (a) *Collaborative leadership*, (b) *Coaching relationships*, (c) *Sharing experiences*, (d) *A culture of learning together*. A total of 181 references related to this theme appeared throughout all six interviews. Below is a sample of the most impactful selections from the transcripts that best represent each subtheme.

Figure 5 demonstrates the weight of the data references for *Partners in learning and leading* subthemes 3.1-3.4. Within Figure 5, there is NVivo data that presents the weight of each subtheme based on the number of data references. This information, at a glance, provides insight to demonstrate the strength of the evidence for each of the subthemes. In addition, credibility is
substantiated by the analysis of the data points or evidence of each of the subthemes. This figure brings clarity into how each of the subthemes contributes to the creation of the theme.

**Theme 3: Partners in Learning and Leading**

This theme describes the relationship between teacher leaders and their colleagues as a partnership in learning and leading.

<table>
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<td><strong>Coaching relationships</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sharing experiences</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A culture of learning together</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14.40%</td>
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</table>

*Figure 5. Weight of Subthemes 3.1-3.4 based on data references from NVivo software*
Introduction to evidence supporting Subthemes 3.1-3.4. To bring the discussion of Theme 3, Partners in Learning and Leading, to a close, the researcher has communicated the details regarding the story of this case study more descriptively. The narrative examples supporting the leading evidence for Theme 3, Partners in learning and leading, is communicated. This evidence, which includes a sampling of the direct quotations, verifies the credibility of the study and its results.

Theme 3, Partners in learning and leading, included quotes from all six participants and 181 data references. These 181 data references, from Theme e, comprised 23.80% of the all the data references uncovered within the case study. The researcher has selected some key quotes from the participants to illustrate the evidence supporting each of the subthemes for Theme 3.

Evidence supporting Subtheme 3.1. The data supporting Subtheme 3.1, Collaborative leadership, is documented next. All six participants contributed to Subtheme 3.1. Within Subtheme 3.1 there were 69 data references. This data set comprised 38.12% of the data within Theme 3. Subtheme 3.1 delivered 9.54% of the data references depicted within the overall case study. There were four data sets within Subtheme 3.1: Shared decision-making, Collaborative processes, Drawn to collaborative relationships, and Lack of collaboration.

Some of the data sets supporting Subtheme 3.1 are displayed in the following text. Those interviewed for this study demonstrated how the process of Shared decision-making assisted in the transformational process. Teacher leaders, such as the following one quoted, encouraged many people’s viewpoints as contributions to decision-making processes. This sentiment was illustrated by the comment, “It helps us to move to a better conclusion, better than what I was thinking, better than what she was thinking, something even better.”
Another participant echoed this within the data set, *Shared decision-making*, when explaining how the group member utilized one another as available resources to move into greater depth of analysis of subjects. The participant described the process as:

I would say generally, giving a lot of ideas, putting a lot of ideas out there, up for grabs, and then deciding which ones we think are best, instead of just, "This is what I think, and this is what we should do." Like, "Well, I've tried this, and I've tried this, and this has worked, and this kind of hasn't worked, but let's talk about all of these different things within the context of our school, our students, and then kind of go from there," instead of just giving one solution, and that's it, I would say would be the most successful.

In support of this, within the data set, *Shared decision-making*, one of the teacher leaders observed, “The more collaborative and carefree, we talk more freely.” Within the data set, *Drawn to collaborative relationships*, teacher leaders spoke to the significance of these relationships. One participant recognized this fact and spoke to its importance when recalling: “With my collaborative co-workers and other colleagues, especially this year, I've been hanging out more and learning from them, which has been a really cool experience.”

**Evidence supporting Subtheme 3.2.** The data supporting Subtheme 3.2, *Coaching relationships*, is confirmed next. All six participants contributed to Subtheme 3.2. Within Subtheme 3.2 there were 54 data references. This data set comprised 29.83% of the data within Theme 3. Subtheme 3.2 delivered 7.46% of the data references depicted within the overall case study. There were three data sets within Subtheme 3.2: *Building confidence in colleagues*, *Personal satisfaction*, and *Positive coaching relationships*.

Some of the data sets supporting Subtheme 3.2, *Coaching relationships*, are presented in the following text. One significant change was relayed within the data set, *Building confidence
in colleagues. This was confirmed with excitement by one participant who shared: “It's nice to see that teacher taking more confidence in her decisions and her planning. It's really nice to see. It's cool. It's really cool to see that empowerment growing.”

An additional data set that reinforced Subtheme 3.2, Coaching relationships, was Positive coaching relationships. This data set is described in the following examples. The participants expressed enthusiasm within the data set, Positive coaching relationships. One teacher gave a specific example of this when noting:

The teacher at the very beginning was like: “I need a lot of help. And I need a lot of time and I want you to just work with me whenever and however you can.” “Doors always open, come anytime. Let's get some regular meetings set up. Let's do it.”

Another teacher elaborated on this within the data set, Positive coaching relationships, by adding, “They specifically ask me, ‘What do you think about this? Can you help me with this?’ And so that's positive for me because I like when people ask for help and ask when they need something.”

**Evidence supporting Subtheme 3.3.** The data supporting Subtheme 3.3, Sharing experiences, is exhibited next. All six participants contributed to Subtheme 3.3. Within Subtheme 3.3 there were 32 data references. This data set comprised 17.67% of the data within Theme 3. Subtheme 3.3 delivered 4.42% of the data references depicted within the overall case study. There were two data sets within Subtheme 3.3: Eagerness to share and partners in learning by sharing experiences.

The data sets supporting Subtheme 3.3, Sharing experiences, are divulged in the following text. Within the data set, Eagerness to share, the participants spoke to the importance of simply sharing. One participant expressed this eagerness to share with zest when remarking,
“I get excited about sharing new information with the teachers.” Another experience of sharing was clearly found within the data set, *Partners in learning by sharing experiences* when one of the teacher leaders stated simply, “That's my thing. Sharing. It's not supposed to be a hide-and-seek, what are they doing?”

The desire to have colleagues share was relayed by another teacher leader within the data set, *Partners in learning by sharing experiences*. The participant made a powerfully intentional comment: “I'll say, ‘we could really use your input here, I know you have a lot of experience with that.” Additional participants emphasized the importance of sharing as found within the data set, *Partners in learning by sharing experiences*. One participant who reflected on past experiences emphasized:

Just kind of that constant communication, making sure that everything's okay, even if it's just a, “Hey, how did that lesson go? Good. Okay. Moving on.” Or, “That was terrible. Was it terrible for you too? Okay. It wasn't just me.”

**Evidence supporting Subtheme 3.4.** The data supporting Subtheme 3.4, *A Culture of learning together*, is verified next. All six participants contributed to Subtheme 3.4. Within Subtheme 3.4 there were 26 data references. This data set comprised 14.36% of the data within Theme 3. Subtheme 3.4 delivered 3.59% of the data references depicted within the overall case study. There were three data sets within Subtheme 3.4: *Collaboratively learning together; Teacher first, Leader Second;* and *Leaders learning from leaders.*

Some of the data sets supporting Subtheme 3.4, *A culture of learning together*, are shown in the following text. The perception of the importance of mutual learning was found within the date set of *Collaboratively learning together*. One teacher leader explained this collective process of learning by summarizing, “Once they're participating and stuff, then I realize that
they're learning and I'm learning and we're interacting together.” Another teacher leader within the data set *Collaboratively learning together*, shared a positive experience of learning together that stood out. The participant expressed:

> I feel like it has been productive, that I've learned something, that maybe they've learned something; that we're all kind of excited in that moment, how long that lasts, I don't know; but in that moment, I feel like I'm excited that we're gonna try something new.

The data revealed a common philosophy that was displayed in the data set, *Teacher first, leader second*. One teacher highlighted this philosophy when explaining their mindset as, “To remind them, ‘I’m in your shoes. I also have students. I also have exit tickets to grade. I have all these same things to do, and so here's how we can learn together.’”

Within Appendix K, the researcher has detailed additional significant direct data quotations for each of the subthemes within Theme 3, *Partners in learning and leading*. This additional data with the direct data quotations further demonstrate the credibility of the results. The additional direct data quotes also validate the resulting Theme 3, *Partners in learning and leading* that emerged.

**Theme 4: Blending personal and professional relationships.** The fourth theme, *Blending personal and professional relationships*, includes expounding notes from the researcher. The notes are provided to assist the reader in interpreting the results. This theme describes the blend of both personal and professional relationships that exist between teacher leaders and their colleagues. Theme 4 has been divided into four subthemes: (a) *Trust*, (b) *Personal connections*, (c) *Positive relationships lead to increase in interactions* (d) *Empathy*. A total of 141 references related to this theme appeared throughout all six interviews. The most impactful selections from the transcripts that best represent each subtheme are presented below.
Figure 6 demonstrates the weight of the data references for *Blending personal and professional relationships* Subthemes 4.1-4.4. Within Figure 6, there is NVivo data that presents the weight of each subtheme based on the number of data references. This information, at a glance, provides insight to demonstrate the strength of the evidence for each of the subthemes. In addition, credibility is substantiated by the analysis of the data points or evidence supporting each of the subthemes. This figure brings clarity into how each of the subthemes contributes to the creation of the theme.

<table>
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<th>Theme 4: Blending Personal and Professional Relationships</th>
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<td>This theme describes the blend of both personal and professional relationships that exist between teacher leaders and their colleagues.</td>
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<td>Subthemes 4.1-4.4</td>
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<td><em>Trust</em></td>
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<td><em>Personal connections</em></td>
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<td><em>Positive relationships lead to increase in interactions</em></td>
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</table>
**Empathy** 22 15.60%

Figure 6. Weight of Subthemes 4.1-4.4 based on data references from NVivo software.

*Introduction to evidence supporting Subthemes 4.1-4.4.* To bring the discussion of Theme 4, *Blending personal and professional relationships* to a close, the researcher has communicated the elements regarding the story of this case study more descriptively. The narrative illustrations of the central evidence supporting Theme 4, *Blending personal and professional relationships*, is conveyed next. This evidence, which includes a sampling of the direct quotations, substantiates the credibility of the study and its results.

Theme 4, *Blending personal and professional relationships*, included quotes from all six participants and 141 data references. These 141 data references from Theme 4 comprised 19.50% of the all the data references uncovered within the case study. The researcher has selected some key quotes from the participants to illustrate the evidence supporting each of the subthemes for Theme 4.

*Evidence supporting Subtheme 4.1.* The data supporting Subtheme 4.1, *Trust*, is justified next. All six participants contributed to Subtheme 4.1. Within Subtheme 4.1 there were 48 data references. This data set comprised 34.04% of the data within Theme 4. Subtheme 4.1 delivered 6.63% of the data references depicted within the overall case study. There were two data sets within Subtheme 4.1: *Building relational trust* and *Lack of trust*.

Some of the data sets supporting Subtheme 4.1, *Trust*, are disclosed in the following text. More than one participant placed emphasis on the critical nature of trust within the data set, *Building relational trust*. One interviewee freely discussed the effectiveness of trust, predicting, “It's about building relationships; and of course, the more sound those relationships are, the more
teachers are going to trust you with concerns or challenges or just seeking insight.” Other teacher leaders directly echoed this perception and added additional insights to the data set.

Building relational trust. Incorporating trust into relationships was clear in the message from one teacher leader who responded: “Making sure that you put in that time so that people trust that you're doing the best thing for students. You're doing the best thing for teachers.”

Another data set that authenticated Subtheme 4.1, Trust, is illustrated in the succeeding text. Within the data set, Lack of trust, the teacher leaders were also aware of the impact or barriers created with the absence of trust within a relationship. One teacher leader referenced the difficult situation that arises when trust is lacking by cautioning:

If I say something to someone, and then I hear it come back in another, from another person, in a different way, like the telephone game. Those are interactions that I don't like. And so, those are people that I don't really wanna say too much to.

Evidence supporting Subtheme 4.2. The data supporting Subtheme 4.2, Personal connections, is described next. All six participants contributed to Subtheme 4.2. Within Subtheme 4.2, there were 37 data references. This data set comprised 26.24% of the data within Theme 4. Subtheme 4.2 delivered 5.11% of the data references depicted within the overall case study. There were four data sets within Subtheme 4.2: First connections, Friendships- benefits, Friendships- challenges, and Lack of connection.

Some of the data sets supporting Subtheme 4.2, Personal connections, are exemplified in the following text. The value of relationships that are viewed as friendships were validated within the data set, Friendships- benefits. In regards to friendships with colleagues, one interviewee stated:
So, I almost think it's easier once you know them better and you're friends. So, it's easier for me in team meetings for me to have more of a leadership role with them, because I'm friends with them and I know them.

Another teacher leader confirmed this within the data set, *Friendships-benefits*. The teacher leader perceived, “If I feel a personal connection, I'm more inspired to work with them.”

Yet, within the data set *Friendships-challenges*, some difficulties that commonly occur with friendships were found. A teacher leader commented: “It makes it difficult when that teacher is your good friend, because especially if they think differently, then you don't want it to affect your friendship with them.” Additional struggles with friendships were also discussed by another interviewee within the data set *Friendships-challenges*. This teacher leader felt this element, “You feel awkward; 'cause it's like you're a friend, you're a co-worker but, you're trying to push them to do something for you.” Within the data set *Lack of connection*, some obstacles to communication and the relationship were also relayed. Regarding a lack of connection, one participant expressed this concern: “You don't feel as open to talk to them, and they don't feel as open to talk to you because you know that it's always business, and you don't necessarily understand each other very well.”

**Evidence supporting Subtheme 4.3.** The data supporting Subtheme 4.3, Positive relationships lead to increase in interactions, is demonstrated next. All six participants contributed to Subtheme 4.3. Within Subtheme 4.3, there were 34 data references. This data set comprised 24.11% of the data within Theme 3. Subtheme 4.3 delivered 4.70% of the data references depicted within the overall case study. There were three data sets within Subtheme 4.3: *Increase in interaction, High frequency of in-person interactions*, and *Low frequency of digital interactions.*
The major data set supporting Subtheme 4.3, *Positive relationships lead to increase in interactions*, are demonstrated in the following text. Within the data set *Increase in interaction*, participants recanted their experiences of frequent interactions in a positive light. For example, a teacher leader explained: “It's about building relationships and of course, the more sound those relationships are, the more teachers are going to trust you with concerns or challenges or just seeking insight.” Others confirmed these sentiments within the data set, *Increase in interaction*. As one interviewee asserted, “I think it's easier to approach a teacher once you've developed a personal relationship with them.” Overwhelmingly among the teacher leaders, there was value placed on the data set, *Increase in interaction*. One participant expressed: “So that builds the relationship even more, and it makes it easier to interact with the other person and share ideas and talk to each other about school things; because you've developed more of a well-rounded relationship.” Again, within the data set *Increase in interaction*, one teacher leader clearly articulated, “It makes me more comfortable sharing and it makes me not only more comfortable, but willing to go into more detail and engage in conversation.”

**Evidence supporting Subtheme 4.4.** The data supporting Subtheme 4.4, *Empathy*, is substantiated next. All six participants contributed to Subtheme 4.4. Within Subtheme 4.4, there were 22 data references. This data set comprised 15.60% of the data within Theme 4. Subtheme 4.4 delivered 3.04% of the data references depicted within the overall case study. There were three data sets within Subtheme 4.4: *Gaining perspective for effective leadership*, *Compassion for teachers*, and *I’m in your shoes too*.

Some of the data sets supporting Subtheme 4.4, *Empathy*, are exhibited in the following text. Within the data set *Gaining perspective for effective leadership*, it was noted that, as time
passed and the rhythm of the school year unfolded, the teacher leaders gained additional perspectives. This is captured in one teacher leader’s statement:

I think in moments of pressure. Teaching is a demanding job, so I think when they're feeling the crunch. I think that can instigate a moment when they need to reach out or I can sense that someone needs to be reached out to.

Another interviewee commented about understanding the challenges their colleagues faced within the data set, *Gaining perspective for effective leadership*. The participant commented:

So, because we’re teachers and leaders, I think that we have a lot of empathy for what teachers have to do. And so that, I think, is really a big thing, because I think we have to understand the burden of grading, and then a bag full of student writing, that could take hours to grade.

The data set, *I’m in your shoes too*, seemed to accentuate Subtheme 4.4, *Empathy*. This quote from a participant endorsed this sentiment of *I’m in your shoes too*, noting: “I think just kind of the way I began the meeting and reminded them that I'm in their shoes, I'm the same as them.”

Within Appendix L, the researcher has included further significant direct data quotations for each of the subthemes within Theme 4, *Blending personal and professional relationships*. This additional data can be found within a table and includes direct data quotations which further demonstrate the credibility of the results. The additional direct data quotes also validate the resulting Theme 4, *Blending personal and professional relationships that emerged*.

**Summary of results.** By conducting this investigation, the researcher acquired considerable knowledge about the perceptions of the teacher leaders’ descriptions of their interactions; he simultaneously gained deep insights into the teacher leaders’ relationships with colleagues. The tables and figures above have presented the data that validates the subthemes
and that thus supports each of the four major themes uncovered in this study. Within any research study, it is critically important to tie the results back to the research questions the study was designed to answer. It is clear that the data obtained from the interviews of the participants answered the research questions.

The research questions that were used to guide the inquiry of the phenomena under study included a central question: How do teacher leaders make sense of their interactions with colleagues within the context of a distributed leadership model in an international school? A sub-question also informed the study: How do teacher leaders describe their relationships with colleagues as they make sense of their interactions within the context of a distributed leadership model in an international school?

In Chapter 5, the researcher will describe how the themes and subthemes clearly answer the research questions. An interpretation of the data obtained will be offered by the researcher. A summation of the themes, as they connect to the research questions, will also be delivered by the researcher.

**Conclusion**

Changing to a distributed leadership model impacts the interactions and relationships between teachers. So, it is important to understand the dynamics of the interpersonal interactions of the teacher leaders and their colleagues to gain a deeper understanding of how a model such as the one explored in this study operates. Without understanding how teacher leaders describe their interactions with colleagues, it is more difficult to support teacher leaders in their roles.

This chapter summarized the data collected on teacher leaders’ perceptions as they sought to convey the nature of their relationships with colleagues and to make sense of their interactions within the context of a distributed leadership model in an international school. The personal
accounts offered by the teacher leaders revealed an understanding of their communications and the relationships they had established with their colleagues. The coding and analysis process of the six semi-structured interviews functioned to condense the data. From this data compression, several themes and subthemes surfaced. Four dominant themes were discovered through the data. Within the dominate themes, there were 16 subthemes exposed.

Amidst the perceptions uncovered in this chapter, significant ideas arose. The participants made sense of their interactions by recognizing that they adapted their responses to their colleagues in the midst of each interaction; they simultaneously used different approaches when engaging with each individual. Their adapted responses included the teacher leader noting their personal desire to fulfill their colleagues’ expectations, an awareness of the colleague’s reaction in the midst of an interaction, the need to navigate challenging interactions, and the necessity of humility and vulnerability. The teacher leaders’ varying approaches with different individuals included the use of reflection to guide their future interactions, the need to interact with diverse personalities, the use of strategic approaches to support varying individuals, and the importance of listening.

The relationship between the teacher leaders and their colleagues was described as partners in learning, leading, and blending personal and professional relationships. As partners in learning and leading, the teacher leaders noted an environment of learning together, collaborative leadership, coaching relationships, and a process of simply sharing experiences. The blending of personal and professional relationships involved trust, empathy, personal connections, and a dynamic through which positive relationships led to an increase in interactions.
In this chapter, the voices and insights of the participants were highlighted. The data analysis and themes focused on: “What does the data say?” The focus of the following final chapter will be to deliver a deeper interpretation of the findings or to answer the question: “What do the data and the resulting themes mean?”

Within Chapter 5, greater depth will be found as the researcher further examines the findings based upon the theoretical framework. In addition, the researcher will contemplate implications for practice, including opportunities for improvement in the on-boarding process for teacher leaders and the possible need for ongoing support. Finally, the researcher will make recommendations for future research to more deeply comprehend this complex phenomenon of human interactions.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

Review of the Project

Administrators value the presence of the teacher leaders who are beneficial to the school culture, teachers, and ultimately student learning. Yet, administrators do not have a clear image of what actually occurs within the teacher leader interactions with colleagues. There is value in being able to more accurately understand how these peer-to-peer interactions smooth the implementation of initiatives and assist colleagues to obtain information and build skills to empower greater student learning. This study provided one detailed resolution of that dynamic to enable an understanding of the interactions and relationships that occur.

In this study, at Colegio Jorge Washington, teacher leaders were asked to describe how they were making sense of their authentic experiences related to distributed leadership through the art of the sensemaking process. Weick (1995) emphasized a simple recipe for sensemaking, “How can I know what I think until I see what I say?” (p. 25). The teacher leaders, using Weick’s (1995) assertion, described their experiences as they answered the interview questions that informed this study. The participants continually refined their own sensemaking processes during the interview process. The researcher will now share the teacher leaders’ sensemaking in this chapter.

Research goal. The goal of this descriptive case study was to gain a better understanding of how teacher leaders make sense of their experiences as leaders within a distributed model of leadership. This qualitative study provided a description of the participants’ perceptions regarding their interactions with colleagues in a distributed model of leadership within the bounded context of an international school in Colombia. The study also provided a description
of the participant’s perceptions of their relationships with colleagues in a distributed model of leadership within the bounded context of an international school in Colombia.

**Research approach and questions.** The qualitative design met the nature and purpose of this research study by gaining an understanding of the teacher leaders’ interactions with colleagues in the context-specific setting (Hoepfl, 1997). This approach allowed the researcher to study the meaning the teacher leaders created, and how they made sense of their experiences; the researcher was committed to achieving an understanding of their perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The single descriptive case study facilitated the exploration of the real-life interactions that occurred within the distributed leadership model under study (Zainal, 2007).

Creswell (2014) and Merriam & Tisdell (2015) determined that qualitative research is an inductive process. Through this inductive process, the data analysis necessarily influences the development of patterns and themes. The inductive approach that was employed is consistent with the research questions, with qualitative research, and with a descriptive case study.

The following questions focused the study and guided the execution of this qualitative analysis. The central question was: How do teacher leaders make sense of their interactions with colleagues within the context of a distributed leadership model in an international school? The sub-question was: How do teacher leaders describe their relationships with colleagues as they attempt to make sense of their interactions? The first question aimed to focus on the interactions of teacher leaders and colleagues and was expected to inform the second sub-question regarding the relationships that developed.

Semi-structured personal interviews were conducted with the teacher leaders; the researcher had determined that this format of inquiry best informed the research questions. The teacher leaders responded authentically and candidly and offered a deep perceptiveness with a
sense of wisdom that led to deeply informed answers to the research questions. The data was analyzed through the lens of sensemaking; it was then connected back to the research questions to find meaning and to further explain the phenomena under study.

**Theoretical framework.** Weick’s (1995) organizational sensemaking model, which informed the study, is grounded in social psychology and it postulates:

To talk about sensemaking is to talk about reality as an ongoing accomplishment that takes form when people make retrospective sense of the situations in which they find themselves and their creations. There is a strong reflexive quality to this process. People make sense of things by seeing a world in which they already imposed what they believe.

In other words, people discover their own inventions. (p. 15)

Sensemaking is often used to as a tool to simplify a more complex set of variables in a study. Participants follow the process of sensemaking to clearly understand the intricate circumstances around them. Therefore, a large amount of information can be more easily processed and evaluated by the researcher when put into a framework that is easier to understand (Weick, 1995).

Each individual within an organization has their own unique viewpoint. Each employee’s experiences and positionality shape their interpretations of any given situation. Sensemaking acknowledges that there is no universally correct interpretation within an organization and that all interpretations are plausible (Weick, 1995). In addition, those interpretations and are constantly changing. Sensemaking recognizes this and provides the researcher with the capability of capturing the ongoing changes within the organizational landscape (Weick, 1995).
Weick (1995) provided seven properties for sensemaking: (a) identity construction; (b) retrospection; (c) enactment of sensible environments; (d) social activity; (e) ongoing; (f) extracted cues; and (g) plausibility over accuracy (Weick, 1995). Each of these seven properties interact to construct meaning. These properties formed the basis for this research and have been referenced throughout the study. Weick’s (1995) theory of sensemaking was used as a lens for viewing the experiences of teacher leaders interacting with their colleagues within a distributed model of leadership.

The interview questions and data analysis for this study were guided by the characteristics of Weick’s (1995) sensemaking theory with the expectation that the participants would make sense of their interactions throughout the process of interview data collection. The interview questions allowed the phenomenon of teacher leader experiences with their colleagues to be investigated; they led to an acquisition of an in-depth comprehension of the construct.

**Themes from the literature.** To investigate the interactions of teacher leaders and colleagues, the researcher studied the literature related to sensemaking and leadership. The focus of the study was distributed leadership as it applied to the role of a teacher leader. Distributed leadership was investigated to ensure a clear understanding of this role of teacher leaders. The sensemaking theory was employed in the data collection process and informed interviewing; it also served as a lens instructing the data analysis.

It was through the sensemaking framework of Weick (1995) that the interview questions were created. The questions were reflective, retrospective, and focused on the social activity or interactions of the teacher leaders and their colleagues. The data analysis was conducted through the lens of the sensemaking characteristics. The bonding of the questions to the sensemaking theory is provided in Appendix G.
The literature revealed that relationships are the foundation of leader success; additionally, change occurs when leaders are empowered to connect with others, one relationship at a time (Beatty, 2007). The core establishing how change occurs is comprised of a network of growing relationships (Beatty, 2007). The distributed model of leadership broadens the volume of relationships and interactions by bringing colleagues together in a manner that promotes positive relationships (Ensley, Pearson, & Pearce, 2003), and its effectiveness has been fully revealed in this study’s data collection and analysis.

The relationship between the leader and the surrounding social group profoundly impacts the leader’s success (Gibb, 1947). Therefore, leadership is not a set of traits, but rather a dynamic interaction between personalities in a social context (Gibb, 1947). The focus of distributed leadership is on the interactions between leaders and followers. Distributed leadership asserts that leadership responsibilities should be structurally divided among a greater number of individuals to widen the web of intelligence and resources (Gronn, 2002).

Spillane (2005) proposed a definition for a teacher leader within the distributed leadership model, which is referred to as leader-plus. Leader-plus acknowledges that school leadership may involve multiple team members in both formally designated positions or it may involve teachers who assume certain leadership responsibilities without a formal title (Spillane, 2005). This study utilized the leader-plus definitions theorized by Spillane. Leader-plus served as the criterion for selecting participants in this study.

The results of the data collected from the semi-structured interviews of six teacher leaders were revealed in Chapter 4. The data analysis produced four themes which supplied the answers to the research questions. This final chapter delves more deeply into these themes uncovered by the data analysis and which clearly informed the research questions. In the
remainder of this chapter, the researcher will explore and interpret the significance of these themes that were uncovered. The chapter will also include a discussion of the findings in the context of the literature reviewed, and an analysis of how the theoretical frameworks presented in Chapter 2 relate to the findings. Furthermore, the implications for educational practice, recommendations for future research, and additional endeavors will be examined. The researcher will complete this study with a final conclusion.

**Major Themes and Subthemes that Emerged from the Study**

The researcher aimed to gain an understanding of teacher leaders’ perceptions of their interactions with their colleagues and these relationships. He listened closely to how the teacher leaders made sense of these interactions throughout the interview process. The researcher found that uncovering the themes that developed and truly understand the teacher leaders’ perceptions was much more complicated than simply knowing what the teacher leaders said. This unveiling process through the data analysis was very time consuming, but well worth the sensemaking that resulted.

The major themes and the subthemes that were discovered are examined within the ensuing Tables 5-8. This subsequent information is delivered in more detail than the broad, overview information disclosed in Chapter 4. These theme summations tie the results back to the research questions this study was designed to answer. The upcoming introductory analysis also includes some broad clarifying notes from the researcher to assist the reader in understanding and interpreting the results.

Table 5 illustrates a detailed examination of Theme 1. The introductory analysis begins with a description of the theme and some broad clarifying notes from the researcher to assist the reader in understanding and interpreting the results. The table includes a summation for each of
the subthemes, including the data references. The combination of the subthemes contributed to the data that uncovered Theme 1, *Adaptability to colleagues during interactions*.

Table 5

**Detailed Examination of Theme One and Subthemes 1.1-1.4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme or subtheme</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 1:</strong> <em>Adaptability to colleagues during interactions</em></td>
<td>This theme describes the perceptions teacher leaders have as they become aware of the responses or cues of their colleagues during an interaction. This perception enacts a change in the teacher leader’s behavior in the midst of an interaction. The data presented within this theme describes the experiences that teacher leaders had during interactions and how they adapted to the varied responses of colleagues. Additional Insights to Facilitate Understanding: Teacher leaders engage in a variety of interactions with colleagues. They lead staff meetings or professional development sessions. They also regularly participate in individual or small group discussions. The data shared, within this theme, will describe the ways in which teacher leaders manage their adaptive responses with colleagues in the midst of their interactions. The participants shared many of the observations, thoughts and fears they have—all within a split second while interacting with colleagues. The participants revealed many factors that influence teacher leaders during these interactions. This theme has been divided into four subthemes: (a) <em>Desire to fulfill expectations</em>; (b) <em>Navigating challenging interactions</em>; (c) <em>Awareness of colleague’s reaction during an interaction</em>; (d) <em>Humility and vulnerability</em>. A total of 229 references to this theme appeared throughout all six participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtheme 1.1:</strong> <em>Desire to fulfill expectations</em></td>
<td>This subtheme addresses the myriad of pressures and expectations that teacher leaders experience within their role. Participants shared how these expectations impact them in their interactions. The data revealed examples of some specific thoughts and feelings, that have occurred, within teacher leaders, in the midst of an interaction. Throughout the interviews, there were 97 references to this subtheme.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Subtheme 1.2:</strong> <em>Navigating challenging interactions</em></td>
<td>This subtheme illustrates some of the challenging interactions that teacher leaders have with colleagues. Participants shared their reflections of specific challenging interactions and how they responded in that moment. Teacher leaders shared various positive</td>
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strategies for managing challenging interactions. Throughout the interviews, there were 60 references to this subtheme.

Subtheme 1.3: Awareness of colleague’s reaction during an interaction

This subtheme describes the ability of teacher leaders to perceive the reactions of their colleagues in the midst of an interaction. Participants shared the cues they look for during interactions that indicate the internal reaction of each colleague. Upon perceiving their colleague’s reactions, participants shared how they spontaneously adapted their approach to the interaction. Throughout the interviews, there were 40 references to this subtheme.

Subtheme 1.4 Humility and vulnerability

This subtheme exemplifies the traits of humility and vulnerability that are demonstrated by teacher leaders during interactions with colleagues. Participants described acts of humility and vulnerability as an essential part of their role. Throughout all of the interviews, there were 32 total references to this subtheme.

Table 6 explains a detailed examination of Theme 2. The introductory analysis begins with a description of the theme and some broad clarifying notes from the researcher to assist the reader in understanding and interpreting the results. The table includes a summation for each of the subthemes, including the data references. The blending of the subthemes contributed to the data that discovered Theme 2, Reflective differentiated approaches to interactions.

Table 6

*Detailed Examination of Theme Two and Subthemes 2.1-2.4*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme or subtheme</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2: Reflective differentiated approaches to interactions</td>
<td>This theme describes the practice of reflection that teacher leaders use to guide their strategic approaches to the varied personalities of their colleagues. The teacher leaders responded with differentiated interactions, based on their reflections of each individual colleague. Additional Insights to Facilitate Understanding: Teacher leaders work alongside a wide variety of colleagues with diverse personality types. This requires teacher leaders to differentiate the way in which they interact with different types of colleagues. In between interactions, teacher leaders have ongoing reflections that guide their approach to future interactions. They seek to find the most strategic approaches that will maximize the support they provide to the diverse team around them. In this</td>
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theme, the participants shared their experiences using reflective
differentiated approaches to interactions within their teacher
leadership practice. This theme has been divided into four
subthemes: (a) Reflecting to guide future interactions; (b) Strategic
approaches to support; (c) Interacting with diverse team
personalities; (d) Listening. A total of 172 references to this theme
appeared throughout all six interviews.

Subtheme 2.1: Reflecting to guide future interactions
This subtheme focuses on the reflections that teacher leaders make
in order to guide their leadership practice. Participants shared how
they intentionally reflect on an ongoing basis. The data provided
examples of teacher leaders reflecting on their practice by asking
for feedback from colleagues, seeking to understanding the root of
issues and by self-reflecting on their interactions to learn from them
for the future. Teacher leaders used these reflections to improve
their leadership practice. Throughout the interviews, there were 59
references to this subtheme.

Subtheme 2.2: Strategic approaches to support
This subtheme uncovers the strategic approaches that teacher
leaders use in order to successfully support their colleagues.
Participants shared their need to discover the specific needs of their
colleagues. The data provided examples of strategic approaches
that teacher leaders used as they sought to support the diverse
members of their team. Providing purpose and other subtle
strategies become evident. Throughout the interviews, there were
53 references to this subtheme.

Subtheme 2.3: Interacting with diverse team personalities
This subtheme addresses the reality that teacher leaders interact
with a team of colleagues who have diverse personalities.
Participants shared their experiences interacting with distinct
personality traits within their encounters. Within the data, there
were two personality traits that surfaced most often. Participants
expressed that when a colleague is outspoken or timid, their
interactions are affected. Throughout the interviews, there were 38
references to this subtheme.

Subtheme 2.4: Listening
This subtheme emphasizes the importance of listening as an
approach to leading. Teacher leaders seek to provide ongoing
opportunities for teachers’ voices to be heard. Participants shared
how they use listening as an essential part of the communication
process during interactions. The data provided specific examples
of how listening helps teacher leaders gain insight and perspective
from their colleagues. Throughout the interviews, there were 22
references to this subtheme.
The following Table 7 illuminates a detailed examination of Theme 3. The introductory analysis below begins with a description of the theme and some broad clarifying notes from the researcher to assist the reader in understanding and interpreting the results. The table includes a summation for each of the subthemes, including the data references. The merging of the subthemes contributed to the data that exposed Theme 3, *Partners in learning and leading*.

### Table 7

*Detailed Examination of Theme Three and Subthemes 3.1-3.4*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme or subtheme</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 3: Partners in learning and leading</strong></td>
<td>This theme describes the relationship between teacher leaders and their colleagues as a partnership in learning and leading. The data revealed how these collaborative relationships lead to a culture of teamwork where teachers learn from one another and lead side-by-side. Additional Insights to Facilitate Understanding: The dynamics of teacher leadership and learning are evolving in the same way classrooms have changed in recent years. In the classrooms, teachers are no longer the “sage on the stage” and have begun empowering students to take ownership of their own learning. This theme demonstrates how teachers leaders are taking a similar approach with their colleagues. Through shared decision-making and collaboration, teacher leaders are inviting their colleagues to be active participants in school-improvement initiatives and to take ownership of their own learning in that process. Along the way, teachers share their experiences with one another so they can learn what is working in each other’s own practice. In this theme, participants described their relationships with their colleagues as they partner together in learning and leading. This theme has been divided into four subthemes: (a) Collaborative leadership; (b) Coaching relationships; (c) Sharing experiences; (d) A culture of learning together. A total of 181 references to this theme appeared throughout all six interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtheme 3.1: Collaborative leadership</strong></td>
<td>This subtheme addresses the style of collaborative leadership used by teacher leaders. Participants discussed how teacher leaders involve their colleagues in shared decision-making processes. The data revealed how teacher leaders are drawn to work closely with colleagues who are collaborative in nature. On the contrary, participants also shared the challenges of those relationships that</td>
</tr>
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</table>
are lacking collaboration. Throughout the interviews, there were 69 references to this subtheme.

Subtheme 3.2: Coaching relationships

This subtheme focuses on the coaching relationships that teacher leaders have with their colleagues. Coaching may refer to side-by-side support of instructional practices, curriculum development, or lesson planning. Participants described their interactions within this coaching role as personally satisfying, particularly because they see the beneficial impact they make as they are helping others. The data highlighted a resulting building of confidence in colleagues as a particular benefit that stemmed from the coaching. Participants shared specific positive coaching relationships they maintained with colleagues. Throughout the interviews, there were 54 references to this subtheme.

Subtheme 3.3: Sharing experiences

This subtheme describes how the relationships between teacher leaders and teacher revolve around sharing experiences. Participants reported an eagerness to share with their colleagues. By sharing experiences together, teacher leaders and teachers are partnering in the learning process. When implementing new programs or units, or when trying a new teaching strategy, teachers often use trial and error to find out what is most effective. Sharing these experiences brought everyone together in the learning process. Throughout the interviews, there were 32 references to this subtheme.

Subtheme 3.4: A culture of learning together

This subtheme explains the culture of learning that exists in a distributed model of leadership. Participants described the relationship between teacher leaders and their colleagues as being a partnership in learning. The participants shared their experiences in learning from other leaders and their non-teacher leader colleagues. The data showed that teacher leaders view themselves as “teachers first, leaders second”. This dynamic is very unique to teacher leadership and helps to create this culture of learning together that was evidenced in the data. Throughout the interviews, there were 26 references to this subtheme.

Table 8 shows a detailed examination of Theme 4. The introductory analysis begins with a description of the theme and some broad clarifying notes from the researcher to assist the reader in understanding and interpreting the results. The table includes a summation for each of the subthemes, including the data references. The fusion of the subthemes contributed to the data that revealed Theme 4, Blending personal and professional relationships.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme or subtheme</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4: <strong>Blending personal and professional relationships</strong></td>
<td>This theme describes the blend of both personal and professional relationships that exist between teacher leaders and their colleagues. The interview data revealed how teacher leaders build and maintain the balance in their personal and professional relationships with their colleagues. Additional Insights to Facilitate Understanding: Teacher leaders are intentional about building both personal and professional relationships with their colleagues. They consistently work to create a bond of trust through authentic interactions with them. Participants shared how empathy for their colleagues is a key factor in their ability to form positive relationships. The data showed that positive relationships may even lead to an increase in interactions between teacher leaders and their colleagues. Participants also shared how they navigate having friendships with colleagues they are leading. In this theme, participants described the dynamics of their relationships with colleagues and what they do to build and maintain such positive relationships. This theme has been divided into four subthemes: (a) <strong>Trust</strong>; (b) <strong>Personal connections</strong>; (c) <strong>Positive relationships lead to increase in interactions</strong>; (d) <strong>Empathy</strong>. A total of 141 references to this theme appeared throughout all six interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 4.1: <strong>Trust</strong></td>
<td>This subtheme uncovers trust as the essential ingredient in the relationships between teacher leaders and their colleagues. Participants described the process of building relational trust with their colleagues. The data provided examples of how teacher leaders view the importance of trust and described instances when trust is lacking in a relationship. Throughout the interviews, there were 48 references to this subtheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 4.2: <strong>Personal connections</strong></td>
<td>This subtheme provides data regarding the personal connections between teacher leaders and their colleagues. Participants shared their experiences managing the delicate balance of leading while maintaining friendships. As the data showed, there are both benefits and challenges that come with having friends as colleagues. The participants also shared how they made those first connections with colleagues that could potentially develop into a friendship and also what it is like when they are lacking a connection with colleagues. Throughout the interviews, there were 37 references to this subtheme.</td>
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</table>
Subtheme 4.3: Positive relationships lead to increase in Interactions

This subtheme illuminates that positive relationships between teacher leaders and their colleagues lead to an increase in interactions. Participants shared their own observations of positive relationships where interactions increased and seemed to come naturally. The data also showed the tendency for teacher leaders to interact in-person at a much higher frequency than through digital interactions. Throughout the interviews, there were 34 references to this subtheme.

**Interpretations of Findings from Chapter 4 Themes and Conclusions**

This research study has delivered a thick description of the sensemaking process of teacher leaders’ experiences interacting with colleagues within the context of distributed leadership in an international school. The rich descriptions collected from the participants produced raw data sets, which were used to uncover the findings in this study. Using a data-driven approach helps to ensure that the conclusions obtained are likely to be free from researcher bias (Yin, 2011).

This section now will provide an interpretation of the emerging themes to enhance the understanding of the teacher leaders’ descriptions of their interactions with colleagues and the resulting relationships. The findings are harmonious with the theoretical framework and the literature from which it originated. It is through the lens of sensemaking theory as well as through the perspectives delineated in the literature review that the findings can be grasped and appreciated.

The study and its results are significant because they add to the body of knowledge of distributed leadership, they demonstrate the functional application of the sensemaking theory to a real-world situation, and they support the current literature on these topics. The results also provide insights for practical implications to improve support for teacher leaders within the context of distributed leadership. The following subsections will address each of these areas of contribution.
The researcher found that to summarize the major insights from this case study, he needed to articulate his thoughts orally and then use Rev.com to transform his analysis into print. By articulating his perceptions, the researcher was able to understand the insights generated from the data and break it into chunks. Furthermore, he was able to assess the research problem from varying viewpoints to create the understandings of the data noted below.

It is important to note how the context of an international school has an impact on the findings due to the types of relationships formed between teachers in this context. The relationships between teachers in the context of an international school are unique due to the distinct set of circumstances surrounding them. Teachers are recruited from job fairs in the United States or through virtual interviews. Each year, a new cohort of teachers arrives the same week in late July. Returning foreign teachers support the incoming teachers as they settle into their new lives overseas. A strong bond is formed among foreign teachers as they navigate the local culture together.

The relationships between teachers in an international school extend beyond their time on campus. They hangout on weekends, workout together, travel together, and party together. Some of them are even roommates. Since most teachers are alone overseas, far away from their families and friends, they also become a support network for one another. They share in hardships and joys.

The intimate relationship between teachers in international schools is important to understand given that it shapes the findings in this study. The depth of personal connections impacts the ways in which individuals interact. Teachers are considerably invested in their personal connections and may not want to strain those relationships for the sake of a challenging professional interaction.
The concept of seniority is also different in the context of an international school. Many teachers only stay two or three years before moving to another location or returning home again. A teacher who has been on staff for four or five years is considered a “veteran” and is referred to as being at the school “a long time.” When this study was conducted, there were not any teachers who had been employed at the school for 20+ years, who might have been resistant to new ideas. Such a high turnover rate commonly impacts the interactions between teachers.

**Interpretation of Theme 1: Adaptability to colleagues during interactions.** The first theme from the data discovered in this case study was *Adaptability to colleagues during interactions*. There were 229 data references to this theme, which constituted the most data references of all four dominant themes. The core meaning of this theme is that when teacher leaders are in the middle of an interaction, they adapt to their colleagues’ responses. The focal point of this theme is found within the context of the teacher leaders focusing on asking themselves: What's happening in this moment, in the midst of this interaction? What are the dynamics at play?

In the midst of an interaction, the teacher leaders reflected on their own inner conversations and feelings; their own personal inner dialogue generated sensemaking. Then, the teacher leaders constructed new meanings within their environment. This enactment of sensemaking by the teacher leaders produced an adjustment. It was this ongoing reaction to cues which prompted the teacher leaders in this case study to act in a different or changed way. This all occurred through the teacher leaders’ sensemaking, as they responded or adapted based on their interpretation of the reactions of those around them.

**Interpretation of Subtheme 1.1: Desire to fulfill expectations.** The first subtheme uncovered was the *Desire to fulfill expectations*. The theme of *Adaptability to colleagues during interactions*
*interactions* began with the inner desire of the teacher leaders to fulfill expectations. Teacher leaders placed expectations on themselves; on what their role was supposed to be; on how they understood they were supposed to act within the context of what others expected of them. These dynamics involved self-imposed expectations such as "This is what I believe a teacher leader should do" or "This is what I believe a teacher leader should say or act like."

This subtheme also originates from a desire by the teacher leaders to fulfill the expectations that they believed colleagues had for them. Many teacher leaders perceived and genuinely believed that their colleagues desired particular attributes from them. Indeed, they identified specific worries, fears, and anxieties that arose in the middle of interactions; most desired their colleagues to perceive them as being successful in their position.

It was identified that sometimes teacher leaders lacked self-confidence prior to an interaction. Beginning an interaction with a lack of self-confidence can impact the teacher leader as the interaction is occurring. Feelings of concern that they are not going to be able to fulfill the expectations that the colleagues have often surged in the middle of an interaction as a result of this lack of self-confidence.

Another message disclosed from this case study was the teacher leaders’ inner desire for their colleagues to consider their interactions worthwhile. The teacher leaders generally wanted the attention of their colleagues and they wanted to be perceived as being captivating or engaging. Teacher leaders remarked that, in the middle of an interaction, many fears and nervous thoughts and feelings surfaced. The teacher leaders revealed that they felt anxieties because they wanted the interaction to be viewed as worthwhile, as they tried to fulfill the expectations that they believed their colleagues had.
Teacher leaders also expressed worries about respecting their colleagues’ time. So, in the middle of an interaction, teacher leaders often attempted to prove to their colleagues that "What we're doing right now is worth your time. It's worthwhile; this is important." The teacher leaders expressed concerns that their colleagues would judge the interaction as not valuable.

Teacher leaders in this case study also revealed a self-imposed expectation that they should have had the answers to all of the questions posed to them by their colleagues. Logically, this is not a realistic expectation for any interaction. But, if these teacher leaders were unable to answer a question, they had a desire to fulfill that expectation and expressed a need to find the answer for their colleagues. So, after the interaction, the teacher leaders often found the answers and then contacted their colleagues anew.

In summary, the teacher leaders wanted to use their colleagues’ time wisely; they wanted to meet their expectations. But, beyond that, the teacher leaders aspired to be engaging in these interactions while satisfying colleagues’ expectations. The teacher leaders in this case study desired that their colleagues would perceive them as not only fulfilling the role requirements, but as generally succeeding in the role of teacher leader.

**Interpretation of Subtheme 1.2: Navigating challenging interactions.** The second subtheme is *Navigating challenging interactions*. This subtheme surfaced frequently, in 60 instances in the data collected for this case study. It was established that it was challenging for a teacher leader to be in an interaction when the exchange is not going well. This subtheme addresses the different strategies teacher leaders interviewed for this study used, in a particular moment, to manage challenging interactions.

Inevitably, there were many different moments when the teacher leaders interviewed for this study had challenging interactions. Since the teacher leaders were interacting with their
peers, this subtheme was prevalent as it seemed to attract the attention of the teacher leaders. It's difficult to have challenging interactions with peers within the role of a teacher leader, and thus navigating these difficulties was frequently disclosed in the interviews.

The case study data provided many examples of challenging interactions and the methods utilized to manage these. One method teacher leaders incorporated into their daily practice to manage these interactions was open communication. Teacher leaders expressed that it was helpful for them and their colleagues to sit down and genuinely talk through the challenges. This “talking it through” method emerged as one of several techniques teacher leaders utilized to manage challenging interactions.

Another coping technique involved “Not taking it personally”. Teacher leaders remarked they had to remember the dynamics of interaction were not about them but were rather about the issue; they came to understand that they needed to let it resolve itself. The teacher leaders, in this case study, noted that they must be open to new ideas. They expressed that, when they would hear challenging thoughts, they needed to tell themselves, "First, I'm not gonna take this personally. And secondly, maybe this is a good idea. Maybe what they're saying and what they're challenging right now is a good challenge, and I need to look at that."

The last approach to managing challenging interactions that emerged was being direct. Given that the teacher leaders were consistently immersed in challenging interactions, sometimes they had to say, "You know what? This is the way it is. You might not like it, but this is what is to be expected of us and we just have to do this. So, let's do it." These different coping mechanisms were insightful disclosures provided by the teacher leaders in their attempts to manage the challenging interactions that they would frequently encounter.
Interpretation of Subtheme 1.3: Awareness of colleague’s reaction during an interaction. The third subtheme is the Awareness of colleague’s reaction during an interaction. While in the middle of an interaction, the teacher leaders monitored how their message was being received or observed the reaction of their colleagues. The teacher leaders expressed that, while they were speaking or presenting, they had an acute awareness of their colleagues’ cues, including body language and tone of the voice; they noted whether or not side conversations were occurring, or if their colleagues were using their computers.

Observing colleagues’ reactions or cues enacted a response from the teacher leaders. The teacher leaders, based on their own personal identity, may have perceived reactions or cues differently. Consequently, the teacher leaders had varied responses to the cues they observed.

When the teacher leaders observed a negative response from colleagues, they often became more nervous and desired to finish the meeting right away. Or, if the teacher leaders saw their colleagues responding positively, they would often continue and explain further to give more detailed information or explanations. The positive cues often fueled the teacher leaders to keep the interaction going longer. Teacher leaders would, in these kind of situations, talk more to keep the interaction going longer.

When the teacher leaders perceived negative cues or sensed that colleagues were not engaged in the conversation, or when they perceived colleagues to be sending cues that they did not think were worthwhile, then the teacher leaders usually responded negatively. In many of those cases, the teacher leaders often wanted to end the interaction; they wanted to find a way out of it. Or, they wanted to prove that the dynamic was worthwhile in some way. Typically, however, they would become more nervous, more anxious, and they tended to want to end the meeting or interaction as soon as possible.
Interpretation of Subtheme 1.4: Humility and vulnerability. The fourth subtheme is Humility and vulnerability. This sense of humility was found within the words the teacher leaders delivered in the data, but also in their nonverbal communication. The teacher leaders in this case study found they needed to make themselves humble and vulnerable to their colleagues to have successful interactions.

Teacher leaders who found themselves in the middle of an interaction had often learned that they really needed to take on the role of facilitator, instead of the role of a heroic leader. What did that look like? In the case of these teacher leaders, it included asking more questions. It involved bringing the ideas of others together. The teacher leaders understood that they did not need to be the expert on everything.

The teacher leaders in this case study divulged that they needed to resign themselves to the fact that they were not always going to know everything. The teacher leaders went on to explain that it takes courage to be vulnerable. Bravery was needed for them to put themselves in situations where they were able to say, "Yes, I'm the leader; but no, I don't know." The teacher leaders realized that they had to make themselves vulnerable to be successful in the interactions with their colleagues.

Interpretation of Theme 2: Reflective differentiated approaches to interactions. The second theme found within the data of this case study was Reflective differentiated approaches to interactions. Within this case, there were 172 data references to this second theme. This theme addresses what happened in-between the interactions of the teacher leaders and colleagues. After an interaction, the teacher leaders commonly responded to enact and construct new meanings within the environment and to generate an adjustment through the sensemaking process.
The teacher leaders interviewed for this study reflected and planned as they considered the best way to approach their different colleagues who possessed a wide spectrum of varying personalities and differing needs. The teacher leaders recognized the need to approach each individual person in a distinctive manner to have a successful interaction. These varying approaches enabled the teacher leaders to be able to lead and support each unique person as an individual.

**Interpretation of Subtheme 2.1: Reflecting to guide future interactions.** The first subtheme discovered was 2.1 *Reflecting to guide future interactions.* This case study data revealed many different ways teacher leaders who were participants reflected after each interaction with a colleague. The teacher leaders remarked that it was through the reflection process that they ascertained the root causes of the responses they received.

More specifically, the data from this case study found that, after a teacher leader finished an interaction, they would ask themselves questions to immediately begin their own sensemaking and reflection process. The teacher leaders would question themselves asking, “How did that interaction go? What went well? What didn't go well? What could I have done differently? Next time, what will I do? When I approach this person, what is the best tactic? What's really going on here?”

The teacher leaders asked these questions as they sought to understand the root cause of what occurred within each interaction. The teacher leaders often asked themselves, “Okay, the person said this, but what were they really saying? What's really happening with that person? Is it something else other than what they actually said?” The goal of this reflection was to help the teacher move forward in the future and target that person's unique needs and more effectively meet those needs.
**Interpretation of Subtheme 2.2: Strategic approaches to support.** The second subtheme revealed from the data analysis was *Strategic approaches to support.* In this study, this strategic approach encompassed assessing colleagues' needs and then ascertaining the best individualistic approach. This strategic support tactic, in the case of the participants in this study, was built upon the individual’s specific needs. The teacher leaders in this case study utilized a diversity of subtle strategies to approach their colleagues.

The data from the case study revealed that providing purpose for their colleagues was an important technique for teacher leaders to ensure successful interactions. The art of emphasizing the intended purpose of an expectation or action helped their colleagues to understand the rationale for the plans or activities. Understanding the rationale for actions led the colleagues to accept initiatives and the actions expected of them. Teacher leaders expressed that explaining purpose was quite valuable; however, it was only one of the many strategic approaches the teacher leaders used to energize their colleagues to move forward with the initiative in progress.

**Interpretation of Subtheme 2.3: Interacting with diverse team personalities.** The third subtheme observed was *Interacting with diverse team personalities.* Teacher leaders commonly interact with many different personalities, which adds another dimension of complexity to their role. To successfully manage this diverse team, the teacher leaders interviewed for this case study first needed to reflect upon the individuals’ characteristics to recognize the numerous personalities and backgrounds they were encountering. This necessitated thoughtful consideration and reflection.

There were two different types of personality characteristics that came to the surface as sub-themes. The first personality characteristic was outspoken colleagues and the other was
colleagues who were timid. The teacher leaders revealed that when a colleague was outspoken or timid, the manner in which they approached the interaction was definitely impacted.

The data from the case study of teacher leaders uncovered that outgoing personalities were more inclined to be open to conflict within an interaction. The interactions, in those cases, were more apt to be challenging and more opinionated. The individuals with outgoing personality traits in the case of this study required a different approach from the teacher leader than those individuals who had timid personalities.

The data analysis revealed that a colleague who is timid often has a lot of great ideas; however, because of their quiet manner, they may not publicize those wonderful ideas. The teacher leaders reported that they needed to approach timid colleagues with more informal side-conversations. The teacher leaders remarked that they often would go more directly to their timid colleagues, one-on-one before meetings, to assure that the voice of timid individuals were also represented in the group.

**Interpretation of Subtheme 2.4: Listening.** The data from this case study of teacher leaders uncovered that a valuable strategy they employed was giving teachers the opportunity to be heard. As leaders, they found that the best approach may not have been to have the teacher leader speaking, but instead listening. Just simply listening to their colleagues with an open mind was identified as a critical aspect of the teacher leader role.

While the teacher leaders interviewed for this study did ask their colleagues for specific feedback on topics, they also employed general listening skills. The colleagues, they found, may have needed to verbalize thoughts or input on a given topic; they may also have needed to have the opportunity to express other concerns or ask questions. It was through listening that the
teacher leaders were allowed to lead, and approach that was described as leading by listening. Thus, one of the chief leadership actions they employed was listening more than speaking.

**Interpretation of Theme 3: Partners in learning and leading.** *Partners in learning and leading* is the third theme this case study discovered. Within this case study, there were 181 data references to this third theme. This third theme facilitated the exposure of answers to the research sub-question regarding how teacher leaders described their relationships with colleagues. The data supporting this third theme was expressed repeatedly; the teacher leaders truly saw themselves in a partnership with their colleagues. The teacher leaders portrayed their collaborative working relationships with colleagues as leading side-by-side.

Within this theme, the researcher found an interesting relationship between 21st Century classrooms and teacher leader relationships with colleagues. Within the 21st Century classroom, the teacher is no longer the center of attention as the sage on the stage with students just getting information. Instead, the learners are active and responsible for their own academic journeys.

Within the teacher leader distributed leadership model, the teachers are actively learning. The teacher leaders are no longer heroic leaders with their colleagues just receiving information from them. Instead, teacher leaders see their colleagues as important partners in the process of learning and professional development. In fact, the more their colleagues are involved in this partnership, the more successful the teacher leaders will be. The teacher leaders work diligently to create this partnership and to consciously involve their colleagues in the process of learning and making decisions. The data analysis from this study confirmed the effectiveness of this dynamic approach to 21st Century teacher leadership.

**Interpretation of Subtheme 3.1: Collaborative leadership.** Subtheme 3.1 *Collaborative leadership* depicts the creation of an environment of learning and leading together. All of the
teachers interviewed for this study were participating in Professional Learning Communities and were having dialogues with each other about the success level of student lessons. Together they were leading each other and learning from each other. The teacher leaders spoke of collaborative processes utilizing the art of dialogue and problem solving as techniques for coaching. This subtheme addresses shared decision making within the context of teacher leaders approaching the decision-making process collaboratively. It was disclosed that the teacher leaders came together with others to acquire input, in an effort to generate the best decision-making results. The data included many specific and insightful examples of this. Indeed, the data explained that all of the teachers were leaders; but they were teachers first. The teacher leaders viewed themselves within the same status as teachers: teacher first, leader second. So, the leadership relationships were highly collaborative.

The teacher leaders spoke of how they were drawn to the relationships of collaborative colleagues. When a colleague was collaborative, the teacher leaders expressed that they tended to be interested in that person’s perspective. The teacher leaders were thus attracted to those relationships and sought those persons out more frequently.

Lastly, the teacher leaders also expressed what transpired when a lack of collaboration existed. It became problematic for teacher leaders who experienced a lack of collaboration. Leadership was challenging when collaboration was lacking.

**Interpretation of Subtheme 3.2: Coaching relationships.** The next subtheme the data unveiled was *Coaching relationships*. It speaks to the teacher leaders coaching colleagues in best practices and strategies for their subject area via the simple process of sharing. It is within this coaching relationship the teacher leaders who participated in this study attempted to build
confidence in their colleagues. This was accomplished by providing authentic positive praise, demonstrating techniques, and giving them chances to practice.

The teacher leaders reported that the sharing of experiences within their coaching role and the resulting relationships provided a great deal of personal satisfaction. The teacher leaders found it fulfilling when colleagues began approaching them frequently to ask questions or request help. It was uncovered that teacher leaders found it rewarding to observe the impact they were having, and it was personally gratifying for them to see other teachers grow and learn. The data also provided many specific examples of what positive coaching relationships looked like.

**Interpretation of Subtheme 3.3: Sharing experiences.** The data uncovered rich descriptions of the dialogue and relationships teacher leaders interviewed for this study consistently had with colleagues in the simple sharing of experiences. This led to subtheme 3.3 *Sharing experiences*, which was actually a dynamic of “I'm coaching you at this time.” This constituted a whole relationship in and of itself which was different from the facilitator role.

Teaching is often about trying new programs and strategies. It is often trial and error. The importance of sharing ideas between teacher leaders and colleagues through interaction was consistently revealed. Comments found within the data included: "Oh, how did this go? Did it go well?" "No. This didn't go well. I'm gonna try this." "Hey guys. I tried this and it worked really well."

Teacher leaders and colleagues were found to be partners in learning which was accomplished through the sharing of experiences. They all considered themselves teachers first and leaders second. Together, understanding these roles, they communicated regarding their classrooms experiences and new strategies they tried.
It was discovered that sharing experiences resulted in an even greater eagerness to share. People were excited to talk about what was happening in their classrooms. This enthusiasm was found within the vocal tones of the interviewees. This sharing resulted in the growth of positive relationships as the teacher leaders and colleagues learned together as partners.

*Interpretation of Subtheme 3.4: A culture of learning together.* The data brought to light that the process of distributed leadership created a change in the way faculty interacted within the school. The data demonstrated that an environment of learning together was established, and this became Subtheme 3.4. This change to an environmental focus of learning together occurred within a communication process involving dialogue and feedback through which the teacher leaders came to perceive their relationship with colleagues as collaboratively learning together.

In addition, the teacher leaders expressed that they learned from observing other teacher leaders lead and from observing other leaders in the school. This further illustrates the collaborative learning that was occurring within the process of leading the school forward. This focus on learning together permeated the school as the revised mission and visioning process focused increasingly on this concept of everyone learning from each other.

*Interpretation of Theme 4: Blending personal and professional relationships.* The fourth theme the data uncovered was *Blending personal and professional relationships.* There were 141 data points that built insights into this theme. This theme shed light onto the process of building relationships and the steps involved in maintaining positive working relationships with colleagues. The benefits of having positive relationships were also unveiled from the data analysis.
**Interpretation of Subtheme 4.1: Trust.** The Sub-theme *Trust*, spoke to the importance of having trust in a relationship, and it incorporated the actions involved in building relational trust. When teacher leaders reflected on their relationships with colleagues, they described trust as a centerpiece of that working relationship. The data explained the process of building trust that occurs over time. The data analysis revealed that after trust was established, relationships change. In short, trust is a game-changer. With trust present, the teacher leaders interviewed for this study expressed that they believed they were able to accomplish much more.

The data analysis simultaneously revealed that when feelings of distrust toward colleagues emerged, relationships also changed. The teacher leaders expressed that without trust, difficulties with colleagues were prevalent. Teacher leaders expressed that if they did not believe that they could trust colleagues with information, they could not confide in them; this led many teacher leaders to lead differently.

**Interpretation of Subtheme 4.2: Personal connections.** The insights into the dimension of personal connections was brought forth within Subtheme 4.2. Within teacher-leadership, a personal connection with colleagues exists that is often a friendship. This personal connectedness in the case of this study was the heart of teacher-leadership; it defined how the school’s style of leadership through the new models differed from typical leadership approaches.

The data divulged that initial connections between the teacher leaders and their colleagues initiated the foundation of important personal connections which often began with people getting to know each other and engaging in a little chit-chat. This often occurred just before or after a meeting as a little side conversation, or maybe during lunch. These interactions and connections were essential to building a personal rapport with the colleagues that comprised the first steps of trust beyond the professional relationship. In this context, the teacher leaders
spoke a great deal about friendship with colleagues which commonly involved spending time together after school, as friends. The data revealed both the benefits and challenges of this process of leading someone while also maintaining a friendship.

The benefits to this type of personal connections were many and included a sense of comfort to communicate, for example, on WhatsApp and ask anything without reservations. It included the ability to have authentic conversations. The interview data revealed that the colleague became a trusted peer whom the teacher leader could confide in. Indeed, when asking, "Hey, how did that meeting go?" the teacher leaders felt confident that they would receive an honest response.

Challenges also occur as a result of these personal connections. Holding friends accountable when they are not performing to the level of expectations established is one challenge. Indeed, in this context, a teacher leader might struggle to tell a friend, "You've got to do this. My reputation is on the line because you're not doing the work."

The final data set for this subtheme disclosed the phenomena of lacking a connection when the personal relationship is missing. The teacher leaders remarked that it is very difficult when the deeper relationship or connection to colleagues is absent or not firmly established. It became problematic for the colleagues in this study to understand the viewpoint of the teacher leader and to maintain an ongoing positive relationship.

**Interpretation of Subtheme 4.3: Positive relationships lead to increase in interactions.**

The fact that positive relationships lead to an increase in interactions was unveiled in Subtheme 4.3. Repeatedly, the participants reported that a positive relationship or personal connection consistently resulted in an increase in interactions. It was reported that colleagues with questions frequently sought to consult and interact with the teacher leaders more frequently. The teacher
leaders, in turn, approached these colleagues more often to obtain input on topics. What occurred then was a bit of a snowball effect; the closer the individuals in this case were to each other, the more they interacted, which enhanced the success of the relationship.

Despite the digital world that characterizes society, the participants noted a higher frequency of in-person interactions and a lower frequency of digital interactions. For example, when the teacher leaders had a question, they stated that they preferred a face-to-face conversation versus writing an email or using another indirect method of communication. For example, the teacher leaders frequently traveled from classroom-to-classroom to directly connect with their colleagues. The teacher leaders expressed that they preferred speaking directly with the person, rather than communicating digitally.

**Interpretation of Subtheme 4.4: Empathy.** An essential ingredient in the teacher leader and colleague relationship was discovered in Subtheme 4.4 which revealed that teacher-leaders empathize with their colleagues. This is different from subtheme 2.3, *Interacting with diverse team personalities*, because empathy is not limited to simply interacting or communicating with others. The practice of empathy goes beyond simply understanding others and transcends to a higher level of connectedness and concern. This process involves an ability to sense the emotions of others to imagine and be present to what colleagues might be thinking or feeling.

The participants described three major approaches through which this empathy occurred. The first approach involved empathizing with colleagues to gain perspective and empower the teacher leaders to lead effectively. Understanding a colleague’s viewpoint assisted the teacher leaders in knowing how to strategically approach a colleague to have a positive interaction. A successful approach aided the teacher leader in achieving the team goals.
The second means of empathy involved teacher leaders understanding the challenges their colleagues had within their roles and having compassion for them. The teacher leaders reported that they reflected on their colleagues’ roles and told themselves “Oh, they have so much grading.” Or, “I know it's difficult, after a long day, to be sitting in a meeting.” This compassion affected the teacher leaders’ emotional responses to colleagues and impacted the messages they delivered in the communication process.

The last way empathy was expressed was through a perspective of "I'm in your shoes, too” which helped build the relationship. The teacher leaders often reminded their colleagues, "Hey, guys, I've got to do this, too” or “Hey, guys, I've got the grading” or “Hey, I have to implement this, too.” Other leaders, such as a school principal, do not have the capacity to deliver this level of empathy that truly expresses the unique connection of "I'm in your shoes, too." This aspect was revealed to emerge only from within the teacher leader and colleague relationship.

**Associations to Conceptual Framework of Sensemaking**

This single case study is significant and meaningful due to its application of sensemaking theory to a real-world setting through the eyes of those with firsthand engagement in distributed leadership. The interview questions from which the data was collected were created within the framework of Weick’s (1995) sensemaking theory. As participants answered questions they reflected on the past, spoke of the present, and envisioned the future; this progression clearly reveals the sensemaking process. This connection to sensemaking continued beyond the interview question format, and the theory became the lens through which the data analysis occurred.
The linkage of the interview questions to the seven key sensemaking characteristics is provided in Appendix G. These connections provide evidence of how sensemaking theory was threaded throughout the study in both the interview questions and the data analysis. Sensemaking theory provided an understanding of the data and it illuminated how meaning was obtained by the participants. Through the lens of Weick’s (1995) sensemaking characteristics, the researcher had the tools to attentively inspect the findings from this study.

The study and the findings that emerged from the data supported and deepened the practical application and understanding of the theoretical framework of sensemaking. Sensemaking is the process of giving order, purpose, and meaning to a situation (Weick, 1995). The source of sensemaking in this case rested in the teacher leaders’ ways of thinking. These perceptions could not be clearly identified within the school setting; they needed to be discovered through the collection of the data.

As noted in the review of the literature, Weick’s (1995) framework provides seven key characteristics for sensemaking: (a) grounded in identity construction, (b) retrospective, (c) enactive of sensible environments, (d) social activity, (e) ongoing, (f) extracted cues, and (g) plausibility over accuracy (Weick, 1995). These characteristics are each independent, yet they also interrelate and interact with one another to construct meaning (Weick, 1995). For example, when the participants were asked to give advice about interacting with colleagues, there were diverse replies given that each person’s identity construction and the cues they extracted were a bit different. Their individual responses varied as the differences between the personal characteristics came into play to create the sensemaking response.

Envisioning the practical application of this theory is meaningful and beneficial to the literature of sensemaking. Theories are abstract; applying them empirically as this study has
done leads to a deeper understanding of the theory and its usefulness. Indeed, living life is really all about creating meaning through sensemaking on a daily basis. This research study has strongly confirmed sensemaking theory as a useful tool to construct meaning and understanding of situations or environments.

Sensemaking theory is akin to following a recipe of principles or characteristics that are present to create sensemaking. The responses of the personal interview questions clearly illustrated all of the ingredients of the sensemaking recipe. The following information provides more detailed insights into how the research study illustrated each of Weick’s (1995) seven sensemaking characteristics.

**Identity.** Individuals are constantly attempting to understand the environment around them and how they fit into it. The teacher leaders who participated in this study created sense through their identity within the teacher leader role amid the bounded system of an international school. Their experiences, beliefs, and interpretations of their identity influenced their understanding of the world and the meaning they created through the action of sensemaking. The discovery of how and what they interpreted and thought was built upon who they perceived they were in the role of teacher leader. This discovery of their personal interpretation influenced their individual understandings.

As teachers take on leadership roles, their own self-identity may change based on others’ perceptions. They may begin to identify more as a leader than a follower, or some combination of the two. As Weick et al. (2005) explained, individuals continuously interpret our environment and enact behaviors in relationship to others, based on who we think we are. As the teacher leader changes their own self-identity, their interpretation of the environment and their personal sensemaking also evolve.
**Retrospective.** The past is clearer than the present or the future. Retrospection is intentionally reflecting backward with the purpose of better understanding the present within the context of the past. The interview questions incorporated into this study asked the teacher leaders to reflect backward in time to create meaning of memories of past encounters with colleagues, within the role of teacher leader. It was when they reflected back on what they had said or done in the past that they created sense for themselves. This verbalization of sensemaking confirmed what they were thinking.

**Enactive of sensible environments.** Within any organization, employees contribute to the environment in which they find themselves. Enactment is the process of co-constructing new meaning within the environment. As employees interact, they enact new meaning together by discussing events that have occurred or by analyzing other aspects of their environment. The employees are directly impacted by this new meaning, and an adjustment occurs internally which will influence their actions in the future. When the employees take action, they have a direct impact upon their environment. There is a shift in the environment itself, and the employees continue with a new cycle of enactment, based upon the new changes in the environment. Both employees and the environment influence each other, and it is in the middle of this interaction where meaning is found (Weick, 1995).

How and what becomes sensible depends on individuals’ location in the world and those they interact with. All of the teacher leaders who participated in this study were in the same location and interacted within the context of one international setting. For sensemaking to occur, the teacher leaders needed to take action. As they inspected or reflected on what they felt, or did, or said within the role of teacher leader, they made sense of the experiences. The act of speaking allowed the object or concept to be examined.
**Social activity.** The teacher leaders were all socialized within an elementary education program. Their perceptions were impacted by their socialization into the role of educator. The social activity of their school also influenced the sensemaking process with its shared meanings, common language, and everyday social interactions (Weick, 1995). This social activity involved not only interactions, but also policies, procedures, and traditions (Mills et al., 2010).

What a person does or thinks is influenced by others. The thoughts, voices, and ideas of each individual who interacted in the school that was the focus of this study were inevitably blended together and influenced every decision or interaction that was occurring. These social interactions influenced the thoughts and sensemaking of the teacher leaders who were all striving to make sense of this for the same audience, the researcher.

**Ongoing.** Sensemaking has no beginning and no end. People are always in the middle of something (Weick, 1995). Our understandings of the world are constantly changing to create meaning and awareness; this is an ongoing process. Thoughts or perceptions are reflected upon after sensemaking is finished being said or thought; however, the process does not pause but rather continues with each new enactment. The interviews all occurred within a one-week time period to provide a common snapshot in time of the participants’ perceptions.

**Extracted cues.** The teacher leader’s sensemaking was built upon the cues they perceived from past experiences and how they filtered those cues to understand a picture of the interactions. Which cues were extracted through their thoughts were dependent upon the context and their personal disposition. Cues provided direction for further action. This internal process of sensemaking transitioned from abstract to real or concrete as the participants verbalized their perceptions. Through the verbalization process, they created meaning from their reflections of the past in response to the researcher’s questions.
**Plausibility over accuracy.** Sensemaking is about plausibility, not accuracy and sufficiency, not completeness. The teacher leader explanations of sensemaking were based on their perceptions without knowing how their followers actually perceived the same past events. They verbalized thoughts until this process seemed sufficient, understandable, and believable. When participants felt like they found the answer to the question, they stopped searching so they could move on to the next interview question.

**Conclusion of association of sensemaking theory.** As illustrated in each of the sensemaking characteristics above, all of the data and themes can be enlightened in terms of the various dimensions of the theoretical framework. It was this framework of sensemaking that brought understanding and meaning to the data in the analysis process. The practicality of sensemaking theory in grasping the results of this study demonstrated its flexibility and applicability in diverse contexts.

This demonstration of connecting sensemaking theory to a real-world setting with teacher leaders participating in distributed leadership provided a model of application for this abstract theory. Therefore, this research study enhanced the meaning of this theory and will empower others to more fully comprehend the theory of sensemaking. This application is significant and adds to the body of knowledge related to Weick’s (1995) sensemaking theory.

**Connections to Distributed Leadership and its Literature**

This research study sought to provide greater insights into the experience and perceptions of the teacher leaders within the context of a distributed leadership model in the real-world bounded setting of Colegio Jorge Washington. The evidence within the literature to support and understand distributed leadership is lacking in depth and breadth, as the theory is relatively young. Thus, additional study of this leadership model is needed. The descriptions of the
teacher leaders’ interactions with colleagues and insights regarding their relationships are valuable pieces of information that were missing within this school.

The findings of this research study added the Colegio Jorge Washington story to a variety of other studies of organizations on their journey towards a distributed perspective. There is much to learn from the experience of implementing distributed leadership and its benefits and challenges. It is only through a research-based qualitative study that a non-biased perception could have been formulated regarding the experiences of teacher leaders in this model of leadership.

Upon data analysis, it was apparent that the results of this study added to the body of knowledge that surrounds distributed leadership. The results of this study supported or extended the findings of other studies in distributed leadership in numerous ways. The means in which this study validated or expanded other research found in the literature is detailed below.

**Personal experiences within distributed leadership.** The literature significantly lacks information on the personal experiences of teacher leaders within a distributed leadership model. Clarke (2013) asserted that there was more to learn about role performance related to team members adopting leadership roles. Clarke (2013) was referring to the limited information on the experience of those sharing in distributed leadership environments and the approach’s impact on the rest of the organization. This research study created an understanding of the teacher leaders’ interactions with colleagues and contributed to the body of knowledge on distributed leadership. Therefore, this study augmented the literature and will give others insights into these teacher leaders’ personal experiences and the sensemaking that occurred.

**Context of distributed leadership within an international setting.** The benefits and challenges experienced when implementing distributed leadership vary greatly based on the
context of each organization. There is limited literature exploring distributed leadership within an international context. This research study is significant given that it adds much value to the breadth and diversity of case study examples applying distributed leadership. This study deeply contributed to the body of knowledge for distributed leadership within an international context.

**Positive relationships.** Without the model of distributed leadership, the amount of interactions taking place between one leader and individuals is limited. The leader is unable to fulfill the relational needs of an entire faculty. Ensley, Pearson, & Pearce, (2003) realized that a distributed model of leadership brings colleagues together and promotes positive relationships.

The current research study supported findings from Ensley, Pearson, and Pearce (2003) within Theme 3, *Partners in learning and leading*. It was discovered within the teacher leader distributed leadership model that positive relationships were promoted. This data was specifically found in Subtheme 3.2, *Coaching relationships*, and the data set *Positive coaching relationships*.

Within Theme 3, the teacher leaders reported that coaching, sharing experiences, and the resulting relationships provided a significant degree of personal satisfaction. It is within this coaching relationship that teacher leaders were striving to build confidence in their colleagues by providing authentic positive praise. The teacher leaders found it fulfilling when colleagues frequently approached them to ask questions or request help. The data also provided many specific examples of what positive coaching relationships look like.

**Leaders adapting behaviors.** Within a meta-analysis study, Yukl et al. (2002) revealed that the most effective leaders must be able to adapt their behaviors to fit the organization. This behavior change refers to the leader’s ability to monitor the environment, propose innovation,
and take risks. This current research study supported this previous finding of Yukl et al. (2002) within Theme 1, *Adaptability to colleagues during interactions*.

The data from this research study described how teacher leaders interviewed adapted to the varied responses of colleagues. As teacher leaders became aware of the responses or cues of their colleagues during an interaction, they enacted an adaptive behavioral change in the midst of the interaction. Specifically, the data found in Subtheme 1.3, *Awareness of colleague’s reaction during an interaction* described how, upon perceiving their colleague’s reactions, participants spontaneously adapted their approach to the interaction.

**Relationships with collaborative colleagues.** The literature revealed that teacher leaders often gravitate towards teachers who are more receptive to collaborating and invest their time to support them (Raffanti, 2008). This action may create a divide between teacher leaders and the rest of their colleagues (Barth, 2001). This research study supported and expanded the previous conclusions attained by Raffanti (2008) regarding the magnetism of teacher leaders toward collaborative colleagues. This study facilitated in deepening the understanding of this complex role.

The data support for this gravitation to collaborative colleagues is found in the data informing Subtheme 3.1 *Collaborative leadership*. More specifically, this information is found in the subtheme data set *Drawn to collaborative relationships*. There is also support for the findings of Raffanti (2008) in Subtheme 4.3, *Positive relationships lead to increase in interactions*, located within the subtheme data set *Increase in interaction*.

**Opposition to teacher leadership.** Teacher leaders have diverse interpersonal experiences that occur on an ongoing basis in their roles. The greatest opposition to teacher leadership success often comes from fellow colleagues. Some colleagues may be resistant to any
sort of change that is brought by a teacher leader. Some may even criticize them as being power hungry in the new position (Bowman, 2004). Some other teachers may just be resistant to any sort of change that is brought by a teacher leader.

Teacher leaders sometimes serve as a liaison between teachers and administration. They need to keep a pulse on staff morale and administrative intentions simultaneously. This can put teacher leaders in a difficult situation when they must uphold a top-down decision, even when they personally disagree. Top-down leadership and teacher leadership do not mix very well together (Raffanti, 2008). Some colleagues may react by assuming an unhealthy “us vs. them” mentality as they begin to see teacher leaders as part of the administrative team. They could make judgments that teacher leaders are “wannabe administrators” or going to the “dark side.”

This research study supported the findings of colleague opposition from previous studies as noted in Subtheme 1.2, *Navigating challenging interactions*, within the data set *Examples of challenging interactions*. Additional data reinforcing this is found in Subtheme 2.3 *Interacting with diverse team personalities* and more precisely in the data set *Experiences interacting with outspoken colleagues*. Lastly, further supportive data is found in Subtheme 3.1, *Collaborative leadership*, within the data set *Lack of collaboration*.

As teacher leaders become aware of the mixed reactions of their colleagues, they must strategically navigate within the environment to achieve success. As Raffanti, (2008) noted, often teacher leaders gravitate toward their more collaborative colleagues. This study confirmed this inference by Raffanti (2008) regarding opposition from colleagues and navigating to more collaborative colleagues. This study will assist in broadening the platform on which the current literature is built upon.
Environment of vulnerability and trust. The climate of a school has been known to influence how faculty members interact with one another. In order for teachers to experience the benefits of distributed leadership in their interactions, an environment of trust must first be developed. Vulnerability is a necessary ingredient to create an environment of trust, where teachers are being asked to participate in a learning community where they are co-constructing the future of the school. As leaders work alongside colleagues, they must remain vulnerable to admit that they do not have all of the answers. Thornton and Cherrington (2014) wisely concluded, “Relational trust is the connective tissue that binds individuals together to advance the education and welfare of students” (p. 95). School leaders must be intentional about establishing this environment of trust for distributed leadership to thrive.

This research study supports the need for vulnerability in the process of creating a trusting relationship, as noted in Subtheme 1.4: Humility and vulnerability. The data set Courage to be vulnerable provides the evidence that undoubtedly reports this need for teacher leaders to be vulnerable. Subtheme 4.1 specifically supports this need for relational trust among colleagues that Thornton and Cherrington (2014) noted as critical. This verification is found within the data set Building relational trust.

In conclusion, this study’s useful contribution has strengthened the body of knowledge of distributed leadership and has assisted in closing the gap that existed in the research. It is the desire of this researcher that these insights have increased the understanding of the experiences of teacher leaders within a distributed model of leadership. It is also the hope of the researcher that these results will contribute to the practice of education to drive improvements in the implementation of this leadership model.

Implications for Professional Practice
The intention of this study was to employ its results as a catalyst of practical ways to support teacher leaders within the context of a distributed leadership model. Thought provoking insights were provided by this study into practical implications that can help support teacher leaders. These insights of practical implications will be shared in the hope that they will be implemented and thus improve support for teacher leaders.

Therefore, the researcher would like to disclose the insights and implications found within the data below. The data revealed some ongoing challenges that many formal or informal leaders may encounter. Practical implications for others to react to their personal environment have also been revealed in the data with the goal of leading to improved leadership practice. These implications, when shared with administrators and teacher leaders, may provide support for teacher leaders within their roles in a distributed leadership model.

Onboarding of teacher leaders into distributed leadership model. The study results delivered further consideration to the teacher leader role and suggested possible adjustments in the onboarding process within the setting of the study. The findings of this study shed light on the perceptions and emotions encompassed within distributed leadership. The results indicate a need for more formalized professional development to acclimate a teacher into this role at the study site and in general, and to facilitate the role adjustment process.

Need for improved onboarding process. The data exposed the need for an improved teacher leader onboarding process. As Subtheme 1.1 noted, teacher leaders desire to fulfill expectations, but it was found that sometimes the expectations were unclear. As one participant explained, “Lots of time they ask me stuff I don't even know the answer to, so it gives me a homework task.” One teacher leader recounted, “Educators like to know stuff. Like to feel ‘in
the know’ and when you're a leader, people look to you for answers and sometimes you just
don't.” This sentiment was also echoed by another participant:

I feel like sometimes teachers and even teacher leaders feel pressured to be edutainers.

Where we ... It's just got to be great and awesome and lively or it's just no good. And
sometimes there is just business that's got to get done.

It became clear that the onboarding process could be improved, as one teacher leader bluntly
stated. “I just always hope that I can keep the momentum and the inertia of the session going so
that it doesn't feel like torture.”

**Change to formalized onboarding process.** The onboarding process for the participants
of this study into this new role was done via a more informal process with the principal. Now
that the unknowns have been discovered and the reality of the emotions of the role have been
revealed, changes in the onboarding process can be implemented. Consequently, the researcher
is planning to implement a formalized professional development process to assist the teacher
leaders in this role adjustment.

It is also envisioned to recommend these same insights be used in the development of a
teacher leader curriculum. As the practice of education moves forward, the process of learning
how to be a teacher leader may be launched within the teacher preparation program to nurture
this role in all teachers. If that becomes standard practice in the future, the researcher hopes that
the insights gained from this study will be considered for inclusion into the curriculum.

**Support meetings and the strength of social connectedness.** The role of a teacher
leader is sometimes isolating; these professionals often exist in lonely silos. The results of this
study revealed role struggles that the teacher leaders were experiencing as they independently
adapted to this new role. The results of this study unveiled the need to enhance the teacher
leaders’ skills in navigating relationships with colleagues. Hearing the voices of the teacher leaders made it clear that team support meetings for the teacher leaders were needed.

While the quotes below will provide evidence of the words delivered, the words in this document do not reflect the nonverbal communication observed by the researcher. Teacher leaders’ need interaction time with each other to obtain supportive feedback that is not evaluative; mutual brainstorming and respectful dialogue are key. Support meetings with other teacher leaders would advance their ability to build trust, support, and rapport with their colleagues.

**Need for sharing.** Teacher leaders need a format for sharing with each other to obtain feedback, ideas, or support. Subtheme 3.3 *Sharing experiences* provided data that supports the need for team support meetings. A participant articulated, “That's my thing. Sharing. It's not supposed to be a hide-and-seek, what are they doing?” Further perceptions came from the data found within Subtheme 4.2 *Personal connections*. One participant explicitly stated, “I ask people who I feel closer with, I'll ask how you think today went?” Simply sharing experiences and the building of relationships could transpire with the future team support meetings.

**Need for feedback from peers.** Complementary understandings, which confirmed the value of future team support meetings, came from the data within Subtheme 2.1 *Reflecting to guide future interactions*. As one teacher leader observed: “

Curiosity. I always love to hear feedback. Whatever it is, constructive, positive, definitely some eagerness to know like, "What's the next step? How did we do today? Are people feeling like they got some resolution to questions they had? Are there lingering questions? Was that an ungodly waste of time? What's the climate, how are people feeling?” I like to hear if I did a good job or a bad job so usually looking like,
how did it go today and ask someone how ... I'm like a first grader… “How do you think today went?” I ask people who I feel closer with, my fellow lead teachers, I'll ask how you think today went?

Providing this necessary feedback for each other could occur within the future team support meetings.

**Need for personal validation.** The data found within Subtheme 3.2 **Coaching relationships** added to this perception, which confirmed the need for future team support meetings. One interviewee disclosed:

I'm sure a lot of it is just wanting to feel validated and wanting to know that the work was worth it. You put a lot of time into preparing it. You do it as a service to your team so you hope that it benefited the team.

The future support meetings would allow the teacher leaders to provide feedback, validation, and coaching to each other.

**Need for collaboration.** Some of the feelings that teacher leaders had, which indicate the need for future support meetings, were found in Subtheme 1.4 **Humility and vulnerability.** As one teacher leader highlighted:

You're supposed to be the one who knows, hopefully, and you don't always know. I am a person with my skill set and my finite set of experiences, and I'm happy to offer those and share those. And I know those are valuable to various people and contexts and scenarios, but at the end of the day, I don't know everything and that's a kind of disempowering feeling for a leader.

The collaboration that would occur within a team support meeting would assist teacher leaders to navigate their complex role.
Data from within Subtheme 3.1 *Collaborative leadership* added additional insights into feelings teacher leaders experienced and the value of planning future team support meetings. One feeling relayed was, “Everyone has valuable ideas, and if you actually listen to them all, it elevates the product you're creating. So, it's being open to change.” As one interviewee emphasized, “I think, when I feel like, we're all on the same side and we're working on this together. And people are excited, and they're adding ideas.” In another example, a teacher leader noted, “You're with them, on the same team, working through it together.” Another teacher leader contributed to this same thought and stated, “It makes me more comfortable sharing, and it makes me not only more comfortable, but willing to go into more detail and engage in conversation.” Yet, one more teacher leader highlighted, “To collaborate and work together. With them, I feel really comfortable.” Another participant stated, “It definitely feels good to have the conversations flowing and see response and get involved.” Within future team support meetings, the teacher leaders could share and collaborate with each other to avoid role struggles and problem-solve as a team.

*Plan for future support meetings.* Therefore, the researcher has begun the process of planning adjustments to nurture this teacher leader talent and improve their overall experience through the strength of social connectedness or friend-power. The ongoing plan is to provide consistently scheduled peer support gatherings for these invaluable teacher leaders. The expectation is that these get-togethers will provide social and emotional support and ultimately improve role efficiency. The hope will be that the teacher leaders will have ongoing renewal for the continued journey of this complex role. In the midst of managing the interactional conflict the data revealed, it may also be valuable to provide periodic support sessions with a school counselor.
These teacher leader support sessions may alternate to include the principal, as a support person, but they may also involve sessions of only teacher leaders. The definite plan will need to be created with input from the teacher leaders. The vision of these meetings includes the teacher leaders submitting agenda topics to the principal to ensure anonymity. A systematic agenda will also be developed to include topics generated from the perceptions of the teacher leaders throughout this study to be addressed as teacher leaders meet independently.

**Purpose of future support meetings.** The purpose of these routine, ongoing teacher leader support sessions is to allow collaborative sensemaking, to provide opportunities to troubleshoot, to brainstorm current concerns, and to facilitate team problem solving. But above all, these ongoing teacher leader support sessions will offer emotional support and unity to the group. In summary, these gatherings would allow the teacher leaders to build relationships, share insights and talents, and reinforce or support each other to ultimately drive successful leadership skills.

The support meetings will also remove any possible silos or feelings of isolation that exist. Instead, this collaborative environment will be a safe haven of support where voices can be heard, problem-solving transpires, and ideas are shared. Essentially, these team meetings will be a retreat where sensemaking will transpire. In the process of sensemaking, the team can strive to not only make sense but also impact the environment with action, given that interpreting and action occur simultaneously.

Within these future support meetings, the team of teacher leaders will create a map of action to follow and prioritize the next steps to ensure ongoing improvement of teaching and learning. This enhanced sensemaking, through the diverse perspectives, will hopefully develop
consistent best practices. These consistent best practices, known at the school as “essential agreements,” can then be shared as new teacher leaders come on-board.

**Navigating challenging interactions with colleagues.** It was determined that sometimes the teacher leaders encountered challenging interactions with colleagues. Every organization has the potential to include individuals with personalities that lean on the aggressive side of the spectrum. It was noted that sometimes, when an individual prefers to not address an agenda item, the person can be resistant or they may change the subject or redirect the conversation. Some insights into this concern will be examined in the following section.

Coping effectively with challenging responses from colleagues was a concern discovered by the data. Challenging responses from others can be very stressful and cause feelings of uneasiness or even distress. Subtheme 3.1, *Collaborative leadership*, provided this insight from a participant regarding challenging interactions and resistance:

Some people are not open to change; or they've decided this is how it should be and it doesn't matter what someone else says or thinks. Once they've decided and they're not open to ideas for how it could be better.

Teacher leaders, like all individuals, need to become comfortable with colleagues challenging or disagreeing with them. The teacher leaders offered several helpful responses to assist with this circumstance of challenging interactions; these are described in the ensuing text. The following insights would also be shared as part of the onboarding process.

**De-escalating challenges responses.** Subtheme 1.2, *Reflecting to guide future interactions*, provided some insights into the teacher leaders responses to these challenges. One participant made the case for the effectiveness of de-escalating the situation, explaining:
So, I feel like I can keep my cool and if I feel like a teacher's responding that way, I'm like, "Hey, that's fine, I'm not directing your class, you get the decision at the end of the day but at the end of the day, you're the one who's going to have to do whatever it is, because next to their mother, you're the most important person in that kid's life. So, I'm not trying to tell you what that looks like, you'll decide. You hate my ideas, I'm not married to any of them. What do you think? What else can you try?" So, try to deescalate and just say, "I'm here to help, what should we do?"

*Striving to understand.* Within Subtheme 2.1, one participant provided the following encouragement to work to understand challenging interactions:

I think, again, it all comes back to the same philosophy that I have: figuring out why they're resistant or defiant. Is it that they don't want to do work? Is it that they feel that it's not best for their students? What is going on? Why are they pushing back so much? Because there's something behind that. It's probably not just that they're being lazy, and if it is, then maybe it's too much work. Maybe it's that we're overwhelming them and they physically can't do that much. Try to figure out what's going on.

Another teacher leader in Subtheme 2.1 added this awareness to challenging interactions:

Generally, people have an opinion based on something, based on a previous experience, based on a fear, but it's coming from somewhere- so really trying to figure out where that's coming from, why they have that opinion or why they have that concern, whatever, and then going from there, instead of just making a judgment right away. "Okay, what's actually going on here? What's the root of this?" Then, you can work to solve that problem.
Attempting to understand the core reason of a colleague’s response was seen as a successful means of coping and managing the situation. One teacher leader in Subtheme 2.1, *Reflecting to guide future interactions*, offered this supportive idea, “I think continuing to ask questions, and finding out what's going on, and understanding someone's perspective, is the biggest thing.” Lastly, a participant in Subtheme 2.1 perceived:

Okay, take a step back. What is it that they're worried about? What is it that they're pulling away about?” And then figure out, maybe they need more support. Maybe there's something that we need to change in this so that they're not feeling frustrated or overwhelmed or like it's wasting their time or whatever.

These responses from teacher leaders noted above provide insights and strategies to effectively cope with challenging interactions through endeavoring to understand the challenging responses.

**Being open.** Subtheme 1.2, *Reflecting to guide future interactions*, provided some insights into the teacher leaders coping responses to these challenges through encouraging openness. As one participant recognized “And then there are people that will challenge your thinking and I think that you have to be open to that.” Meanwhile, a participant in subtheme 1.2, *Navigating challenging interactions* explained, “So, if somebody challenges your thinking, you've got to be really open to that and be ready to anticipate, ‘Hey that may be the way to go, but you guys think about that.’” This openness was offered as a strategy for navigating challenging interactions.

**Use of “talking it through”.** Several interviewees supported and spoke to the value of being open to colleagues’ thoughts and the usefulness of talking it through. Within Subtheme 1.2 *Reflecting to guide future interactions*, a teacher leader indicated, “But, if they're willing to
sit down and figure out where both parties are coming from and come to a conclusion together that's in the best interest of students and everyone; then I think that's the easiest.”

Additional data found in the Subtheme 1.2, *Navigating challenging interactions*, supports the finding of this resistance from colleagues and offers a solution. As a teacher leader referenced:

I've seen some teachers who are like, "I've been doing this a while and I've got to make sure it stays this way, even though I hear other members of the team saying, "Well, is this working?... is this working? Could we try this?

Probing for insights, talking it through, and offering alternative solutions are examples of strategies to practice in response to challenging interactions.

**Being direct.** While some colleagues ask confronting questions to learn, understand, and try to make sense of a topic; other colleagues may be more interested in defending current practices and resisting change. This resistance was noted in Subtheme 3.1, *Collaborative leadership*, data set *Lack of collaboration*. One teacher leader gave an example of this resistance by sharing this thought, “I would say if people come into something thinking, ‘I don't want to do this. I don't want to change.’ They're unwilling to talk about something, then that's the most difficult situation.” Within Subtheme 2.2, *Strategic approaches to support*, a participant asserted the following as a direct response to resistance,

And also, "What are your specific issues?" Address them specifically, not just, "I don't want to do it. I don't like it." "Okay, why? Give me really specific things that I can help you with." because just, "I don't like it. I don't want to." is not specific enough. I can't help you if that's what you say to me.
Another teacher leader within Subtheme 1.1, *Desire to fulfill expectations*, addressed resistance bluntly by noting, “They think that they have it figured out and they don't want to change, I would say, kind of stuck in their ways and don't want to improve based on what we're talking about.” Coping effectively with challenging responses from colleagues was a concern verbalized by the teacher leaders.

Responding to challenging interactions or resistance from colleagues is stressful. Providing opportunities for sharing and problem-solving to cope effectively with challenging responses from colleagues would be valuable. These opportunities would hopefully provide greater role satisfaction for the teacher leaders.

**Use of mirroring and reframing with challenges interactions.** The data also revealed that this challenging conflict could be reframed as the person’s manner of processing information. Some individuals are able to process information and create sensemaking internally through their thoughts; other individuals need to process information externally by speaking aloud. The data from subtheme 2.3, *Interacting with diverse team personalities*, offered an additional explanation regarding differences in individual responses. As a participant wisely referenced:

I don't like to argue and she will tell you that she likes to argue. That's how she likes to get to conclusions. "I like to argue," and I'm like, "Okay." So, I argue with her, and that's how we get to our conclusion, so I do have to mirror her approach to have a productive outcome.

In this example, the teacher leader used mirroring and reframed a challenging response to an individual’s way of being.
This use of mirroring and reframing a demanding conversation was done to seek understanding of the individual’s response. Reframing a difficult conversation by understanding that it might be due to the fact that the individual is just striving to process the information, rather than resisting it, may assist teacher leaders in coping with a conversation that feels like conflict. This mirroring and reframing is a successful coping strategy for challenging interactions.

**Don’t take it personally.** The data exposed that ongoing challenges or a sense of conflict may create emotional unrest for the teacher leader. Subtheme 1.2, *Navigating challenging interactions*, provided many insights of this uneasiness. A participant wisely noted their approach: “To make it interesting and to make it exciting; and to not take it personally. To never lose sight of yourself as a teacher.” A different participant commented:

I would say, not to take things so personally 'cause not everyone is going to respond to you the way you want to and you can't let it affect you personally. If they… more they don't want to be there and they don't want to do it, it doesn't really matter who you are. Sometimes there are some people that… that is just the way it is. They don't want to be there. It doesn't matter who you are, so don't take that too personally.

Another teacher leader in Subtheme 1.2 stressed:

I quickly realized that that was creating more tension than needed to be there and that this question needed to just come off the table and the next time the wagons were circled, put it back out there so I wasn't the messenger, I was the facilitator, but they had a chance to talk together. I realized I just need to communicate that more openly and everyone together.
All of these teacher leaders offered suggestions that referenced the mantra of “Don’t Take it Personally”.

**Keeping meetings on task in the midst of challenges interactions.** Another challenging event revealed through the data was when individuals take the focus of the group meetings off-topic. As noted within Subtheme 1.2, *Navigating challenging interactions*, one teacher leader mentioned:

The teacher was getting very tense in general. About feeling the meeting was more about placing blame than looking for solution. And so, some of the strategies were very quickly shot down, and the tone of the meeting, from this teacher especially was getting kind of heated.

Learning how to address meetings going off-topic is a skill that all teacher leaders need to learn. As noted in Subtheme 1.4, *Humility and vulnerability*, one teacher leader explained their strategy to stay on topic by noting, “I usually tend to say, ‘This is what we need to talk about and do you guys have anything else we need to talk about?’ and just keep it organized and on task.”

**Use of questioning and the use of possible topic parking lots for future discussions.** The teacher leader needs to learn to be mindful of monitoring people who are taking the agenda off-topic, confronting this activity, and reminding the group of the current topic being discussed. Within Subtheme 1.2, *Navigating challenging interactions*, one teacher leader relayed, “And so, the first thing I thought was, ‘Okay. I'll ask her questions about this.’ So, I said, ‘Well, I'd love to know more about that, the research, I'd love to see that.’” Another teacher leader emphasized, “So rather than making it one person pushing against another, I'd rather kinda just open it up. There's nothing to be pushing against.”
A new subject or topic that is being introduced by a colleague could be placed in a topic “parking lot” list to be added onto a future agenda. A participant stressed in Subtheme 1.2, *Navigating challenging interactions*:

I was really interested in her perspective, even though it came across as like, she just put up a brick wall. And instead of trying to argue with her or say something, I just said, "Send me the research. I'd love to hear more about that."

The examples above illustrate effective meeting management and de-escalation skills. This skill of meeting management, of keeping an agenda on task, could be included in the teacher leader onboarding and reinforced in the support meetings.

**Co-creating a map of action.** Teacher leaders need to be able to admit to not knowing and to seek to reframe this as a challenge of finding the answer together or co-creating a map of action (Weick, 2009). Within Subtheme 1.2, *Navigating challenging interactions*, one teacher leader confirmed, “We usually come to a better conclusion. ‘I think this. You think this.’ We go back and forth.” Another teacher leader in Subtheme 3.1, *Collaborative leadership*, illustrated, “And then, their opinions, and thoughts, and suggestions are just as valuable, and it's my job to kind of bring them together and create something.” In addition, a teacher leader conveyed in the *Listening* Subtheme 2.4, “I think that the other thing is, to keep seeing people's different perspectives. And if someone has a different perspective, to ask why they have that and where that came from, and to try to bring that into the conversation.” Another participant within Subtheme 2.1, *Reflecting to guide future interactions*, understood the best response to be, “I also try to see things from their perspective, and try to figure out what's going on.” The teacher leaders believed that creating action plans together, as a shared team, generally resulted in a higher-level product.
Therefore, it is important to remember the usefulness of curiosity and the power of not knowing to encourage mutual problem-solving and to embrace sensemaking, as each of us is in the process of becoming. From within the Collaborative leadership Subtheme 3.1 data, one participant reflected, “Sometimes we disagree and we argue about things, but not in a bad way. We usually come to a better conclusion.” Another teacher leader summed up in Subtheme 3.1, “It helps us to move to a better conclusion, better than what I was thinking, better than what she was thinking, something even better.”

**Building confidence.** The teacher leaders interviewed in this study exhibited a supportive attitude, a teamwork mentality, and sincere willingness to help colleagues as needed. Teacher leaders have many difficult conversations with colleagues who may be struggling with a portion of a new initiative or just with day-to-day concerns. The data uncovered that the teacher leaders’ confidence may be affected in the midst of challenging conversations. The following insights would also be shared as part of the teacher leader onboarding process.

**Need for confidence or belief in oneself.** A need to build confidence was unveiled within the data. Perceptions of this need to build teacher leaders confidence were found within Subtheme 1.1 Desire to fulfill expectations, more specifically within the data set Lack of self-confidence. Within Subtheme 1.1, one teacher leader acknowledged being “self-critical sometimes. And I'll take work home and go around in my brain about like, ‘Should I have done this or said this or asked for this.’ Yeah, I totally do that.” Another participant identified: “I get nervous only in that they might not feel what I have to say is worth being there.” A third participant expanded, “Generally, nerves, just naturally. You get a little bit nervous about, ‘Am I gonna clearly explain myself? Are they gonna think I'm being stupid? Am I wasting their time?’” An additional insight was found in Subtheme 2.1, Reflecting to guide future
interactions, as a teacher leader reflected, “And I understand that there was more to that, and there was more to that perspective, but I felt like, ‘Am I doing this wrong? We're not really having the conversation I wanted to have.’” This need to build confidence or a positive belief in oneself will be addressed as an intervention with the school under study.

Value of positive feedback. It is well-known that affirmation of a job well done powerfully builds confidence. By focusing on a positive perspective, celebrating achievements, and recognizing the hard work individuals are putting forth, the researcher hopes to ensure that teacher leaders are recognized for their good work. The researcher believes there is an opportunity for more encouragement directed toward the teacher leaders at the study site. Currently, no one is focused on ensuring teacher leaders have the emotional support they need to build and maintain confidence. The researcher plans to be mindful of working to build the confidence of these teacher leaders by listening attentively, giving positive affirmation, and celebrating the successes that occur. The goal will be to empower the teacher leaders to exhibit a positive aura imbued with a sense of confidence and calm.

Quiet colleagues. Some teacher leaders spoke of quiet colleagues who have valuable ideas but are hesitant to verbalize their thoughts. The data discovered that quiet colleagues, who are cautious to contribute, concerned teacher leaders. One teacher leader in Subtheme 2.4, Listening, emphasized the need for teachers to be heard or listened to:

So, many teachers feel like they don't even have that voice. It's really disempowering, it degenerates the community, the team dynamic, such as just taking time to listen. In a forum, privately, whatever it takes. That's the most essential thing. I would say tip top. The following insights will also be shared as part of the teacher leader onboarding process.
**Affirming quiet colleagues.** It may be helpful for the entire team to be reminded that sometimes the novice has different perspectives or ideas that may lead to a best practice standard. As a participant in Subtheme 2.3, *Interacting with diverse team personalities*, communicated the importance of: “The ones that might need reassurance, I mean, to just look for the good things that they're already doing and point those out to kind of give them more confidence about it.” In Subtheme 4.3, *Trust*, a teacher leader related, “To just give them praise about it and that helps them build their confidence; and they seem more confident about things and they'll tell me more of other things that they feel like are going well.” By affirming these quiet colleagues and giving recognition for expressing opinions, providing encouragement, and offering generous but honest feedback, one can help the quieter person to excel.

**Asking questions of quiet colleagues.** The role of the teacher leader includes ensuring that everyone contributes. Within Subtheme 2.3, *Interacting with diverse team personalities*, a participant pointed out:

But if someone is a little bit quieter, I might ask 'em some questions and kind of dig a little bit more; to figure out what they're actually thinking instead of just filling the space with my own speech, trying to figure out what they're actually thinking if they're not volunteering those ideas.

A teacher leader, in Subtheme 2.4, *Listening*, suggested:

I think continuing to ask questions, and finding out what's going on, and understanding someone's perspective is the biggest thing. And also, trying to get voices who are not heard to be heard, even if they don't wanna talk in meetings very much.

Sometimes, it could be these quiet colleagues who may inspire the innovation to create the solutions that transcend tomorrow’s concerns.
**Everyone has a voice and every voice should be heard.** It is important to remember that everyone has a voice and every voice needs to be heard. As one participant reported in the *Interacting with diverse team personalities* subtheme 2.3:

I think that there are people on our teacher team who have really good things to contribute; but stay quiet in meetings. So, I pay attention, think of those people first, because I wanna make sure their voices don't get left out.

The teacher leader needs to meet quiet colleagues where they are and lead them to take the next step – whatever that next step is. These quiet colleagues are like Cinderella or the Frog Prince, sometimes they only need to be invited or accepted, perhaps on an ongoing basis, to show their true talents. This was noted in the *Listening* Subtheme 2.4, when a teacher leader mentioned, “I think, having lots of ways for people to voice their opinions, and get things out that they need to talk about or figure out.” A teacher leader echoed this point in Subtheme 4.3, *Increase in interaction*: “I think just teachers feeling more comfortable in general. It's about building relationships and of course, the more sound those relationships are, the more teachers are going to trust you with concerns or challenges or just seeking insight.” The teacher leaders upheld the premise that all team members have a responsibility to add to the group and support the group to improve.

**Foundational virtues of humility and courage.** Education continues to change as the discovery process of how people learn is constantly evolving. We don’t know, what we don’t know. Because of this, the teacher leaders wisely confirmed that the core virtues of humility and courage are at the foundation of the teacher leader role. The following insights will also be shared as part of the teacher leader onboarding process.
**Need for humility.** This need for humility was noted within Subtheme 3.4, *A culture of learning together*, with several teacher leaders opining that everyone is always learning together. One teacher leader spoke primarily about this thought by stating, “Having a positive attitude and you don't feel like you're above anybody, that you're with them on the same team working through it together.” The belief in the importance of humility was echoed by many of the teacher leaders in varying data sets.

The data within Subtheme 1.4, *Humility and vulnerability*, provided a depth of understanding regarding the need for humility. One participant cautioned, “I don't think that you can just walk in and feel like you know more than everybody else or feel like you're there to fix anybody's teaching or teach them something they definitely don't know.” Another teacher leader elaborated further: “I would say first of all, just try to keep yourself on the same level as them. Every time I've been a leader in anything, even as a teacher, I've never tried to put myself above everyone else.” A further example of humility found in Subtheme 1.4 is found within this participant comment:

> Say my leadership position is just being the person to organize. We're all on the exact same level. I am just the one who's kind of like, "Okay, this is our topic. Let's talk." I'm the introducer. I'm the one who takes notes; but I wouldn't say that I'm above anyone.

> I'm not having to check anything. I'm not telling them what to do.

Lastly, a teacher leader gave some specific examples of actions by stating, “You're not gonna tell them what to do. You're just there to help organize things. You're just there to help facilitate the conversation, not putting yourself above.”
**Teacher first, leader second.** The motto of Teacher First, Leader Second comprises a data set within Subtheme 3.4 *A culture of learning together*. One participant within Subtheme 3.4 shared:

Teacher leadership, you're the teacher first, and then you're a leader, and that's how it should be for all teacher leaders. All teacher leaders should feel that way. You are a teacher first. You're not a leader first. You're the teacher first, and so as a teacher, you need to be open. You are on the same playing field as all the other teachers. You are all teachers, and so just acknowledging that I am a teacher. And then, their opinions, and thoughts, and suggestions are just as valuable, and it's my job to kind of bring them together and create something.

**Learning together with a spirit of inquiry.** Within Subtheme 1.4, he teacher leaders consistently relayed the need to practice humility. The teacher leaders exhibited this humility with a spirit of inquiry as they referenced using current research to drive change, make decisions, and lead innovations to improve learning outcomes. In this study, the teacher leaders described how they learned and worked together with colleagues to more effectively generate learning solutions. This focus that everyone is a learner was noted within Subtheme 3.4, *A Culture of learning together*. One participant’s thoughts were included in this statement: “I mean I feel like I'm accomplishing something, that we're all learning something, that it's a good experience, that we're all gonna come out of it with something positive.” The participants expressed that we are all fellow lifelong learners, regardless of which desk we are sitting at.

The data revealed that the teacher leaders and their colleagues learn, collaborate, and grow together as lifelong learners as they work to support student success. As one participant clearly explained in Subtheme 1.4, *Humility and vulnerability*:
You have to learn to accept that it's not always about knowing everything; but about bringing people together and posing the questions that can look for ideas. Maybe not even the answer, but ideas that can guide that question into the direction it needs to go. It's just like how teaching has changed. We're not doing whole group anymore, the teacher talking to people. You're supposed to be splitting up and differentiating and doing small groups.

For this process of collaboration and learning to occur successfully, a foundation must be built upon humility. The need for the virtue of courage within the teacher leader role is discussed next.

**Virtue of courage.** The need to have courage was also found within Subtheme 1.4, *Humility and vulnerability.* One participant elaborated:

You have to be a little bit brave, too. You have to be able to crack yourself open and be vulnerable with people and be willing to co-teach or want to teach in front of them, even though you know that it won't ever be perfect, and those are not your kids. You're doing your best to throw yourself into the mix and see what works for this teacher or this group of kids or this standard that you're trying to teach. You have to be brave and a little bit vulnerable. And be okay with that.

**Celebrating more.** Teaching is a difficult role and is often thankless. The use of celebrations with a sense of gratitude is often missing from most schools. Therefore, the researcher plans to infuse a greater sense of gratitude into the environment of the school with a focus on celebrating.

**Need for celebrations.** This need to for celebrations was uncovered in Subtheme 4.3. A wise teacher leader pointed out:
It's really good to start on positive notes not just jumping right in. I think that makes everybody, even myself, feel better even if we do a congratulations to so-and-so, or even just a thank you, or hey guys ... Just bringing it more on a personal level.

A basic human need we all have is to be validated and recognized by others.

**Service oriented perspective.** The teacher leaders have done a great deal to promote school improvement, and they typically just keep moving forward to the next initiative or next step. Within Subtheme 2.1, a participant embraced this perspective, “You do it as a service to your team, so you hope that it benefited the team. To know, like did we go in the steps that we needed to go, in the right direction? How did it feel?” A comment found in Subtheme 4.4, *Personal connections* demonstrated the integrity of the teacher leaders, “And with you trying to put yourself in the place of the teacher or the students. Compassion. Just doing it from a place of just wanting to help and support and then just being.”

Many teams often do not stop to celebrate the good work that has occurred. Instead, everyone keeps racing onward. There is no built-in pause button to celebrate achievements and express gratitude to these service-oriented teacher leaders.

**Teacher leaders expressing gratitude to teachers.** Within Subtheme 4.3, a teacher leader provided an example of when they expressed gratitude to others:

But, it's also the way people respond to you, like when you're thankful someone does something for you, or you seek them out and ask for help. But, if you are open about, "I want help. I need help. Come help me." You're grateful and thankful, it continues. It's just the way people respond. It's your reaction to our interaction.

While teacher leaders take time to express gratitude to others, reciprocity is often lacking based on the nature of this distributed leadership role. Therefore, the researcher is planning to infuse a
greater emphasis on expressing gratitude for the wonderful work that the teacher leaders do through the practice of celebrations. This celebration of good news could be added to the beginning of every teacher leader support session to ensure a pattern of ongoing expressions of gratitude and affirmation.

**Teacher leaders support teachers.** Teachers turn to the teacher leader for support and guidance, and to obtain their interpretation of events or dynamics. Within Subtheme 2.1, a teacher leader noted the patience and support provided for a group of teachers and made this comparison:

> It's like when you have a lesson and it doesn't go the way you wanted to and you're like, I totally thought that they were going to get this, and you got to go back and re-teach. It's...you're teaching adults.

While the teacher leaders work diligently to provide this support for others, the data showed that the structure of the teacher leader role does not inherently provide the presence of support or gratitude for the teacher leader.

**Teacher leaders focus on self-deficiencies, instead of personal strengths.** In listening to what the teacher leaders said in the data collection process, there seemed to be a frequent focus on their deficiencies and a self-questioning of their abilities or skills. As a participant referenced in Subtheme 1.1, “Generally, nerves, just naturally. You get a little bit nervous about, ‘Am I gonna clearly explain myself? Are they gonna think I'm being stupid? Am I wasting their time?’” Or as noted in Subtheme 1.1, a teacher leader expressed that they could “be self-critical sometimes. And I'll take work home and go around in my brain about like, ‘Should I have done this or said this or asked for this?’ Yeah, I totally do that.” Throughout the data collection
process, the teacher leaders commonly focused on their deficiencies rather than their personal strengths.

Teacher leaders support teachers and express gratitude to colleagues with a self-less sense of service and dedication. Yet, there is an absence of a formal support and validation system for the teacher leaders. Thus, through the data, it was determined that the school needs to focus on celebrating more with the teacher leaders. These celebrations will focus on the strengths of the teacher leaders and on expressing gratitude to them.

**Conclusion of practical implications.** The purpose of this study was to inform the researcher of the teacher leaders’ descriptions of their experiences interacting with their colleagues in order to provide better support for teacher leaders within the context of a distributed leadership model in an international school. Without the meaningful results obtained, the implications noted above would not have been realized or addressed. The researcher plans to offer the above interventions to improve the support provided for teacher leaders.

The significant data collected and analyzed pointed to several concerns or stressors, described by the teacher leaders, which can be addressed and minimized via the practical implications noted above. Without the results of this research, these implications and adjustments to improve the support for teacher leaders would not have transpired.

**Future Research**

This research study on distributed leadership provided noteworthy findings on the interactions and relationships between teacher leaders and their colleagues. The findings added to the current body of knowledge of distributed leadership. However, further research is needed to both confirm and expand this study’s conclusions.
Within this study, the researcher strove to provide adequate descriptions so the readers will be able to discern which insights are applicable to their own context. To facilitate future studies, this researcher would like to note that the design of this study certainly allows for duplication in other settings. To facilitate this replication, the researcher carefully recorded the steps of the research process (Yin, 2003). Deficiencies in the literature in distributed leadership are still present; therefore, further research is still warranted, ideas for which are presented below.

**Future research specifically related to this study.** It is apparent that further research is needed to confirm and broaden the conclusions of this study. The validity could also be enhanced in future studies through triangulation – use of multiple sources of data beyond interviews. Lastly, additional research needs to be conducted to replicate the findings of this study and improve its generalizability.

The benefits and challenges experienced when implementing distributed leadership vary greatly based on the context of each organization. This study was limited to one geographical location, an international school, and the themes and findings are based upon the context of the study and therefore are not necessarily generalizable beyond this site. There is limited literature exploring distributed leadership within an international context. So further studies within the international context are required to gain a better understanding. A comparative study between this site and an additional international school to determine similarities and differences in the findings would be of value. Generalizability would be improved if additional studies that include other international schools were completed.

The small sample size of six participants does not lead to easily generalizing the findings of this study to other settings or populations. Additional studies with a larger sample size would
expand the generalizability of this study’s results. Replicating this study would also help
determine whether the findings hold true across other populations of teacher leaders.

Replicating this study at other schools of the same size would clarify if these same
findings would emerge at other similar-sized institutions. It is unclear if school size, and the
resulting economy of size, is a variable that impacts the results of implementing teacher
leadership and the perceptions of the teacher leaders. Duplicating this study at schools of varied
sizes would clarify if the variable of size impacts the results.

Broadening this study to include multiple schools may lead to varying perceptions of
teacher leaders. Future research could expand through a multi-case or cross-case analysis
approach with different schools to compare and contrast the varying cases. A comparative study,
which could focus on comparing international schools to stateside schools, small to large
schools, private to public, or newer versus more established distributed leadership programs,
could yield interesting results. Obtaining this broader view would add depth to the insights and
add value to understanding the perceptions of teacher leaders.

The research study method used was a qualitative descriptive case study. The data was
not triangulated, which may be seen as decreasing the validity. Investigator triangulation could
be done, using the same interview questions, to determine consistency in responses. Data could
also be obtained via a focus group of teacher leaders, using the same interview questions, to add
greater validity to the results.

The teacher leader role began at the school that was the focus of this research study
within the six years prior to the study’s design, as a new initiative. Additional longitudinal
research, within this site, would allow for an assessment of changes in the teacher leaders
perspectives. Further research is also needed to investigate other settings that have had distributed leadership in place longer or that have more experienced or veteran teacher leaders.

After implementing a formal onboarding process for teacher leaders, as the data from this study suggested, it would be valuable to repeat this study. Studying the perceptions of new teacher leaders who have experienced the new onboarding process would bring additional insights. That research would help to validate the onboarding content and the extent to which it better prepared new teacher leaders for the role transition.

The data from this study suggested a need for ongoing teacher leader team support meetings. It would be beneficial to study the perceptions of the teacher leaders after these support meetings have been in place. This research would help to validate the value of these ongoing teacher leader team support meetings and determine any future process changes.

**Additional future research needed related to distributed leadership.** There are many future studies that could add to the body of knowledge related to distributed leadership. It is apparent that further research is needed to confirm and broaden the conclusions that resulted from this study. In addition, there were several studies in the literature review that were not confirmed by this research study.

The first area that is in clear need of further research is to develop a clear theory/definition of distributed leadership. Currently, there is no clear universal definition of distributed leadership. The most widely used definition stems from the work of Spillane on practice and leader-plus, which was used in this research study. A clear theory or definition would assist schools in understanding the role of a teacher leader and in implementing best practices regarding these roles.
While Serban and Roberts (2016) found a strong correlation between distributed leadership and task satisfaction for team members, this was not confirmed within the data collected and analyzed in this study. While there are tools available to measure task satisfaction, this was not included in this study. Thus, future research is needed to demonstrate if distributed leadership leads to increased task satisfaction. In addition, not enough evidence exists to demonstrate that distributed leadership leads to increased team performance.

Angelle (2007) noted that teacher leaders with the essential skills of collegiality, collaboration, and communication experience a higher rate of acceptance from staff and higher overall success. Additional research is needed to confirm the higher acceptance rate of teacher leaders with these skills. This additional research would assist in the preparation or selection of teachers who would then be successful in this teacher leader role.

The study by Heck & Hallinger (2010) showed significant growth in student achievement, both reading and math, after implementing distributed leadership. Additional research is needed to determine this correlation between distributed leadership and student achievement. The current study did not quantify how distributed leadership impacted student success. It would be valuable to measure and compare student success before beginning implementation of distributed leadership and during selected time periods after implementation.

Best et al. (2012) studied distributed leadership in the health care system in Canada and found that it was a key component of creating lasting change. Specifically, there is a link between distributed leadership and a sustained commitment to change. This linkage was not studied in this research study; therefore, additional research is needed to confirm this important relationship.
As noted, previous research found that distributed leadership leads to increased involvement and an increased support for change initiatives. This increased involvement influences the level of employees’ organizational commitment (Farndale, Van Ruiten, Kelliher, & Hope-Hailey, 2011, p. 125). Studying the correlation between organizational commitment and the institution of distributed leadership is also needed.

Additional studies to correlate frequency of interactions and the method of interaction to the teacher leaders’ perceptions of conflict would also be useful. These additional studies could determine possible best practices for interactions. The goal would be to assist teacher leaders in having more positive perceptions of interactions and relationships and hopefully greater role satisfaction.

Goleman (1996) found that social intelligence is needed for teacher leaders to fulfill the challenging responsibilities of the role while also maintaining positive relationships. Therefore, social intelligence of teacher leaders could be measured to determine if there is a correlation to this variable with the comfort level of teacher leaders in their interactions with colleagues. This additional research could help larger schools in the selection process of teacher leaders. Another research topic would be to correlate social intelligence and job satisfaction within the role of teacher leader.

The emotional intelligence level of teacher leaders could also be studied. The emotional intelligence could be measured to determine if there is a correlation to this variable and the comfort level of teacher leaders in interactions with colleagues. An additional research area to explore would be to correlate emotional intelligence and job satisfaction within the role of teacher leader.
This study did not interview any colleagues of teacher leaders; the participants were all teacher leaders. Studying the perceptions of the colleagues, to encircle additional sides of the relationships, might lead to different findings regarding the perception of the interactions and relationships. This would add a new dimension to the investigation of teacher leader and colleague interactions and relationships.

In general, additional research is needed to determine how to best prepare individuals for the role of teacher leader. The question of whether or not core teacher preparation programs should include curriculum for this role needs to be addressed. It would also be valuable to correlate role preparation to job satisfaction in the role of a teacher leader.

As noted, there are still deficiencies in the literature examining distributed leadership, and further research is still warranted. Additional studies in the emerging research field of teacher leaders’ perceptions of their interactions and relationships is especially needed. It is the hope of this researcher that this study has stimulated additional interest in studying distributed leadership to build upon this body of knowledge and to hopefully contribute to the creation of best practices that could lead to further improvement in student learning.

**Additional Endeavors**

This researcher sought to make a difference in the practice of education by obtaining this degree and completing this dissertation. This dissertation process has required efficient time management and effective project management to plan, collect, and analyze the data and then to communicate the results. He has found that this dissertation process of delivering insights into the interactions and relationships of the teacher leaders with their colleagues has played an integral role in his professional development.
The researcher believes it is his professional responsibility to share the insights he has gained through this study. Therefore, he is scheduled to co-present with a chief academic officer from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development at an upcoming Tri-Association Conference. He will be sharing the role that distributed leadership has played in the implementation of standards-based grading.

In addition, the researcher intends to investigate additional opportunities to share these findings with other professionals. This may include conferences, educational journals, or other leadership groups. The researcher desires to make a contribution to his profession, impact professional practice, and ultimately make a difference to improve student learning.

This researcher believes that the teacher leader role leads to educational improvement and empowers schools to make a significant difference in student learning and in assisting students to reach their goals. The findings of this study illustrate how the teacher leaders at one school made sense of their interactions with colleagues; several consistent themes that emerged as conclusions of this study. Looking forward to the future, there is much more to consider. Therefore, he may engage in additional research on this topic as he moves forward in his career.

**Conclusion**

Implementing a distributed leadership model impacted the interactions and relationships between teacher leaders and their colleagues. The role of teacher leader is not a step above the role of teacher but is really a part of the teacher role as a co-learner and contributor. As the teacher leaders collaborate with colleagues, they expand their own learning and advanced school improvement efforts.

After a fairly brief role orientation process, these teacher leaders successfully transitioned into this new role. The teacher leaders did this without any past experiences in their personal
toolkits to draw upon and to use to make sense of this role. Therefore, these teacher leaders independently searched for making sense of their interactions with colleagues and of their new role meaning creation.

This research study has captured the essence of the interactions and relationships of the teacher leaders and their colleagues. From the data, it was realized that the teacher leaders have been independently and successfully managing these complex roles. The teacher leaders have built a new positive means of interacting and relating together, managing many social and emotional stressors.

From the analysis of the perceptions of the teacher leaders, several significant ideas arose. The participants made sense of their interactions by recognizing that they adapted their responses to their colleagues in the midst of each interaction, and they used different approaches for each individual. Their adapted responses included the teacher leader noting their personal desire to fulfill their colleagues’ expectations, an awareness of the colleague’s reaction in the midst of an interaction, the need to navigate challenging interactions, and the necessity of humility and vulnerability. The teacher leaders’ varying approaches with different individuals included the use of reflection to guide their future interactions, the need to interact with diverse personalities, the use of strategic approaches to support varying individuals, and the importance of listening.

The relationship of the teacher leaders and their colleagues was described as them being partners in learning and leading, and as blend of personal and professional relationships. As partners in learning and leading the teacher leaders noted an environment characterized by learning together, practicing collaborative leadership, developing coaching relationships, and simply sharing experiences. The blending of personal and professional relationships involved
trust, empathy, personal connections and the recognition that positive relationships lead to an increase in interactions.

This research study suggested several implications for practice such as creating a formal process for onboarding new candidates into the teacher leader role and scheduling ongoing teacher leader team support meetings. The results also offered suggestions for insights to be shared with teacher leaders during the onboarding process, such as: insights for managing challenging responses from colleagues and quiet colleagues, insights for teacher leaders to build their confidence, insights for using humility and courage within the teacher leader role, and the insight that teacher leaders should celebrate together.

These insights are significant given the lack of literature related to the perceptions of the interactions and relationships between teacher leaders and their colleagues. The data analysis and interpretation offered rich insights and a deep understanding of the interactions within the complex and dynamic relationships between a teacher leader and colleagues. The insights found in the study will assist other administrators in supporting teacher leaders.

The researcher undertook this study to personally gain knowledge, but he also aimed to add to the body of literature and, most importantly, to improve support for teacher leaders. The data supported the conceptual framework of sensemaking as well as the current literature on distributed leadership. The researcher has provided an interpretation of this data analysis, proposed further research opportunities, and outlined future implications and actions to further support teacher leaders. It is the hope of this researcher that you, the reader, take this research study and its interpretations and positively impact your professional practice in education.
References


Appendix A

Research Approval Request to School Superintendent

November 13, 2017
Dear Dr. Desroches,

As you know, I am currently a student researcher at Northeastern University (NEU). I am working on a thesis proposal to study distributed leadership in international K-12 schools. The purpose of this letter is to request permission to conduct a research study at Colegio Jorge Washington.

My interest is to study the experiences of teacher leaders to better understand how they perceive their role within a distributed model of leadership. Data will be collected from a small group of approximately 6-8 staff members during individual interviews. The voluntary participants will be teacher leaders currently working at the school.

Following your approval, I will apply to the NEU Internal Review Board for further approval to conduct research with human subjects.

The proposed study will examine how teachers make sense of their leadership roles in a distributed model of leadership. In particular, the study will focus on the interactions of teacher leaders with other followers. The results of the study will help principals and teacher leaders better understand the experiences of teacher leaders, which may lead to improvements in the way distributed leadership is implemented.

Please contact me directly at (317) 476-5858 or via e-mail if you have additional questions, or the chairperson of my committee, Dr. Rashid Mosley at Northeastern University, can be contacted at r.mosley@northeastern.edu. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you regarding this request.

Respectfully,
Nicholas Glab
Doctoral Candidate 2018, College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University, Boston
Appendix B

Research Approval Letter from School Superintendent

November 13, 2017
Dear Mr. Glab,
Thank you for your interest in studying the distributed leadership model at Colegio Jorge Washington. I can see the great benefits that your research may have on our school community, as well as other international schools implementing a similar model of leadership. I would like to take this opportunity to formally approve your request to conduct your study at Colegio Jorge Washington. I know you to be a very trustworthy and ethical professional, so I have complete confidence in your ability to conduct research within our school community. You can count on my support for whatever you may need in the process.

Best of luck as you proceed with your research.

Regards,
Dr. Steve Desroches
Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Part I: Introductory Protocol

Thanks for taking some time out of your busy day to help with this interview. This is part the dissertation for my doctoral program. You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about teacher leadership at the school.

My research project focuses on how teacher leaders make sense of their interactions with colleagues in a distributed model of leadership within the context of an International School in Colombia. Through this study, I hope to gain more insight into how teacher leaders experience these interactions with colleagues. Hopefully this will allow me to identify ways in which principals can better understand the interactions between teacher leaders and colleagues.

As I mentioned in one of my previous emails, I am in the final phase of my doctoral studies at Northeastern University, and I am interested in gathering stories about how teacher leaders interact with their colleagues.

I want to emphasize that all of my participants will remain anonymous, and that your participation is completely voluntary. If you don’t mind, I would like to review these consent forms with you before we begin.

[Review and sign NEU Consent Forms]

Thanks. Because your responses are important and I want to make sure to capture everything you say, I would like to audio record our conversation today. Do I have your permission to record this interview?

[Thank the participant; let them know I may ask the question again as I start recording, and then turn on the recording equipment]

Also, I will have a professional transcriptionist to transcribe the interviews. The transcriptionist will receive the audio labeled by a pseudonym, so they will never know your name to maintain confidentiality. Once the audio recording is transcribed, I will email you a copy for your review. Is that okay? I can assure you that all responses will be confidential and only a pseudonym will be used when quoting you from the transcripts. I will be the only one with access to the recording, which will be eventually destroyed after it is transcribed.

Do you have any questions about the interview process or how your data will be used? This interview should last no longer than 60 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to ask. There may be times where I may probe you to go deeper in your explanations. Feel free to express your honest opinions. My job here is to truly listen and understand your perspective on the issue. You have the right to only answer the questions you feel comfortable answering. You can quit at any time.
Do you have any questions before moving forward? I will begin with a couple of introductory questions.

**Part II: Interviewee Background**

Warm-up Questions:
- What do you enjoy most about teaching?
- What teacher leadership roles have you held throughout your teaching career?

**Part III: Interview Questions**

One of the things I am interested in learning about is teacher leaders’ experiences interacting with their colleagues. I would like to hear your perspective about being in teacher leadership at the school. To do this, I am going to ask you some questions about the experiences you have encountered. I will use the word “colleague” a lot throughout the interview. In this context, I am referring to other homeroom teachers in the school who you work with in your role as a teacher leader. If you mention other people, please do not use their real names. You can use a pseudonym instead.

1. The first two questions are about how your interactions typically occur with colleagues.
   a. How frequently do you interact in-person with colleagues?
   b. How frequently do you interact with colleagues via email or other methods of communication?

2. I’m curious to know more about your experiences while leading staff meetings or professional development sessions.
   a. As you reflect back on times when you led a staff meeting or professional development session, what feelings do you recall having before the meeting started?
   i. What might be some reasons those feelings surfaced at that time?
   b. Now fast forward to the middle of the staff meeting or professional development session. What types of feelings tend to arise at this point?
   i. Help me understand, what might bring those feelings on?
   c. Let’s say that the staff meeting or professional development session has just ended. What types of emotions might be most prevalent at that time?
   i. What might bring about those feelings?

3. Now let’s move on and talk about the different ways that colleagues interact with you:
   a. Think for a moment about your teacher team. What types of personalities first come to mind? What might be some ways that these different personality types interact with you? How did you respond?
   b. As you consider interacting with these different personality types, how might you change your approach in working with those teachers?
   c. As a result of your differentiated approaches, what might be some changes in behavior that you’ve noticed in your colleagues over time?
   d. How has this impacted your approach to leading different types of people?

4. Tell me about one of your successful interactions you’ve had with a colleague.

5. Tell me about a challenging interaction that you’ve had with a colleague.

6. During an interaction with a colleague, what signs might you look for to determine their feelings toward you or your message?
   a. If the signs are positive, how does this affect you?
   b. If the signs are negative, how does this affect you?
7. Think about a time when a teacher has been either resistant or defiant. How might you respond to them in that situation?

8. What might be some factors that can make it more difficult to approach a teacher?

9. What might be some factors that can make it easier to approach a teacher?

10. Reflect on a few colleagues that have been most helpful to you as a teacher leader. What might be some behaviors that you found helpful?

11. Reflect on a few colleagues that have been least helpful to you as a teacher leader. What might be some behaviors that you found unhelpful?

12. When you think about teacher leaders in general, what might be some qualities that lead to positive interactions with their colleagues?

13. The next set of questions will focus on specific colleagues and the interactions you have with them on an ongoing basis:
   a. Think about 1-2 colleagues that you have had ongoing positive interactions with. Tell me how the relationship developed over time.
   b. Think about 1-2 colleagues that you have had ongoing difficult interactions with. Tell me how the relationship developed over time.
   c. Think about 1-2 colleagues that you have had ongoing neutral interactions with. Tell me how the relationship developed over time.

14. If I were a teacher moving into a teacher leadership role, what advice would you give me about interacting with colleagues?

That is all the questions I have. Thanks so much for your time to answer these questions. If I come across a need to ask any follow-up questions in order to clarify one of your responses, would it be ok for me to contact you?

Within the next month, I will email you the interview transcript. If you choose, you can review the information, and you will have one week to provide me with any feedback, alterations, or corrections.

Also, I will give you a gift card for your participation in this research study within two weeks from now.

Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you so much for your participation in this study!
Appendix D

Recruitment Letter

Dear TEACHER LEADER,

As you may know, I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University (NEU) and I am working on my dissertation. I have received permission from Dr. Desroches and approval from the NEU Internal Review Board to conduct my research study at Colegio Jorge Washington from January – June 2018. I am asking that you consider participating in the study.

The title of the research study is **Leading Together: A Descriptive Case Study Exploring the Sensemaking of Teacher Leaders Within Their Roles in a Distributed Model of Leadership.** The proposed study will examine how teachers make sense of their leadership roles in a distributed model of leadership. The results of the study will help principals and teacher leaders better understand the experiences of teacher leaders, which may lead to improvements in the way distributed leadership is implemented. In addition, it will allow you to reflect upon your own experiences and leadership style.

To conduct this study, I will be asking participants to dedicate approximately 60 minutes for an interview about their experiences. My preference is to do the interview face-to-face in a location and at a time that is convenient for you. During the interview, I will ask you to answer a series of questions about your experiences leading within a distributed model of leadership. With your permission, the interview will be digitally recorded and professionally transcribed. After the interviews are transcribed, you will have the opportunity to review your transcript for accuracy and clarification.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Additionally, your participation in this study is strictly confidential, and your identity will not be disclosed. My advisor and I will be the only individuals to know of your involvement. Although there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study, you may withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question.

I ask that you please consider participating in this study. Your participation will help contribute to the understanding of how teacher leaders experience distributed leadership. For your participation, you will receive a $50,000 COP gift card to Crepes & Waffles. If you are comfortable with the purpose of this study and are willing to participate, please let me know by DATE at glab.n@huskey.neu.edu or call 317-476-5858.

Thank you for your consideration,

Nicholas Glab  
Doctoral Candidate 2018  
College of Professional Studies  
Northeastern University
Appendix E

Pre-Interview Email

Dear TEACHER LEADER,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study Leading Together: A Descriptive Case Study Exploring the Sensemaking of Teacher Leaders Within Their Roles in a Distributed Model of Leadership. I would like to remind you that your participation is completely voluntary. By participating in this study, you will help contribute to the understanding of how teacher leaders experience distributed leadership, which may lead to improvements in future implementation in international schools.

I would like to schedule a time and place for our interview. Since I am working with 6-8 participants, would you please provide me with at least two 60-minute time slots that would be convenient for you to hold the interview? Also, please provide a place for the interview where you would feel most comfortable.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you,

Nicholas Glab
Doctoral Candidate 2018
College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Appendix F

Signed Informed Consent Form

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies
Investigator Name: Principal Investigator - Dr. Rashid Mosley
Student Researcher – Nicholas Glab

Title of Project: Leading Together: A Descriptive Case Study Exploring the Sensemaking of Teacher Leaders Within Their Roles in a Distributed Model of Leadership

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?
This case study is focused on better understanding how teacher leaders make sense of their interactions with colleagues within a distributed model of leadership. As a teacher leader, your perceptions and experiences are valuable to gain this understanding.

Why is this research study being done?
The purpose of this study will be to understand how teacher leaders describe their experiences interacting with their colleagues within a distributed leadership model in the context of an international school. This will be done through a single case study of a private N-12 international school that is implementing distributed leadership.

What will I be asked to do?
The researcher will be looking for you to participate in the following ways:
- Participate in an interview session that will be audio taped.
- Participate in a member check process to verify the contents of the interviews and interpretations of the primary research.
- Your participation is voluntary, and you can opt out at any time.

Where will this take place and how much time will it take?
Individual interviews will take approximately one hour each. Interviews will take place at a location of the participant’s choice and at a time that is mutually agreed.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?
There are no significant risks involved in being a participant in this study.

Will I benefit by being in this research?
There are no direct benefits for your participation in the study. However, the information learned from the study may provide valuable insights that could assist principals in better understanding the experiences of teacher leaders, which would lead to a healthier implementation of distributed leadership. Current and future teacher leaders may also benefit from reflecting on the experiences of other teacher leaders, which may lead to improving their teacher leadership skills.

Who will see the information about me?
Your part in the study will be completely confidential. Pseudonyms will be used for all study participants. Only the researcher will be aware of the participants' identities. No reports or
publications will use information that can identify you in any way. The data collected for this study will be kept by the researcher, including audiotapes, but will not be shared with others. False names will be used in reports. All audiotapes will be destroyed following transcription of the interviews.

In rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about you and other people in this study. This is done only to be sure that the research is done properly. The researcher would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as Northeastern University to view the study data. No identifying information will ever be shared with people.

If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?
You are not required to take part in this study. If you do not want to participate, you do not have to sign this form.

What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?
There are no known significant risks involved in being a participant in this study.

Can I stop my participation in this study?
Participation in this study is voluntary, and your participation or non-participation will in no way affect other relationships (e.g., employer, school, etc.). You may discontinue your participation in this research program at any time without penalty or costs of any nature, character, or kind.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?
- Principal Investigator – Dr. Rashid Mosley; Northeastern Faculty located in Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies.
  Email: r.mosley@northeastern.edu
- Student Researcher – Nicholas Glab; Doctoral (EdD) student in Northeastern University’s College of Professional Studies.
  Email: glab.n@husky.neu.edu

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?
If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: (617) 373-4588, Email: nregina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Will I be paid for my participation?
A $50,000 COP gift card to a local restaurant will be given to participants as a gesture of gratitude for their participation.

Will it cost me anything to participate?
There is no cost to participate in this study.

I have read, understood, and had the opportunity to ask questions regarding this consent form. I fully understand the nature and character of my involvement in this research program as a participant and the potential risks. I agree to participate in this study on a voluntary basis and understand that I can depart from the research study at any time.
Research Participant (Printed Name)

_______________________________

Research Participant (Signature)

_______________________________

Date
Appendix G

Connections Between Weick’s Sensemaking Characteristics and the Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview question</th>
<th>Sensemaking characteristic</th>
<th>Reasoning for connection of question with specific characteristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The first two questions are about how your interactions typically take place with colleagues.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. How frequently do you interact in-person with colleagues (For example: once a week, several times a week, about once a day, or multiple times in one day)?</td>
<td>Retrospective social activity</td>
<td>The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. How frequently do you interact with colleagues via email or other methods of communication (For example: once a week, several times a week, about once a day, or multiple times in one day)?</td>
<td>Retrospective social activity</td>
<td>The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I’m curious to know more about your experiences and feelings you have while leading staff meetings or professional development sessions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. As you reflect back on times when you led a staff meeting or professional development session, what feelings do you recall having before the meeting started?</td>
<td>Retrospective social activity</td>
<td>The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grounded in identity construction</td>
<td>The focus of acting in the role or identity of the teacher leader was the emphasis of the question.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
i. What might be some reasons those feelings surfaced at that time?

Retrospective social activity

The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.

Plausibility over accuracy

It is difficult to be accurate or certain of the etiology of feelings in the past. Therefore, the accent of plausibility was deeply rooted in this question.

b. Now fast forward to the middle of the staff meeting or professional development session. What types of feelings tend to arise at this point?

Retrospective social activity

The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.

Grounded in identity construction

The focus of acting in the role or identity of the teacher leader was the emphasis of the question.

i. Help me understand, what might bring those feelings on?

Retrospective social activity

The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.

Plausibility over accuracy

It is difficult to be accurate or certain on the etiology of feelings in the past. Therefore, the accent of plausibility was deeply rooted in this question.
c. Let’s say that the staff meeting or professional development session has just ended. What types of emotions might be most prevalent at that time?

Retrospective social activity

The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.

Grounded in identity construction

The focus of acting in the role or identity of the teacher leader was the emphasis of the question.

i. What might bring about those feelings?

Retrospective social activity

The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.

Plausibility over accuracy

It is difficult to be accurate or certain on the etiology of feelings in the past. Therefore, the accent of plausibility was embedded in this question.

3. Now let’s move on and talk about the different ways that colleagues interact with you:
   a. Think for a moment about your teacher team.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Retrospective social activity</th>
<th>Extracted cues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.1) What types of personalities first come to mind?</td>
<td>The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.</td>
<td>The heart of this question was asking the teacher leader to determine cues they extracted regarding personalities through their senses and perceptions to create meaning. The extracted cues vary depending on the individual personal dispositions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a.2) What might be some ways that these different personality types interact with you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retrospective social activity</th>
<th>The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extracted cues</td>
<td>The central point of this question was in asking the teacher leader to determine cues regarding personalities interacting with them through their senses and perceptions to create meaning. The extracted cues vary depending on the individual personal dispositions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enactive of sensible environments</td>
<td>The focus of this question pertained to the environmental influences and the process of constructing new meaning. The enactment process and the adjustment that occurred is the focus of this question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As you consider interacting with these different personality types, how might you change your approach in working with those teachers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As a result of any differentiated approaches, what might be some changes in behavior that you’ve noticed in your colleagues over time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Tell me about a successful interaction you’ve had with a colleague.

Retrospective social activity

The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.

Extracted cues

The center of this question was asking the teacher leader to determine which cues they extracted through their senses and perceptions to create meaning. The extracted cues vary depending on the individual personal dispositions.
5. Tell me about a challenging interaction that you’ve had with a colleague.

Retrospective social activity

The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.

Extracted cues

The center of this question was asking the teacher leader to determine which cues they extracted through their senses and perceptions to create meaning. The extracted cues vary depending on the individual personal dispositions.

6. During an interaction with a colleague, what signs might you look for to determine their feelings toward you or your message?

Retrospective social activity

The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.

Extracted cues

The center of this question was asking the teacher leader to determine which cues they extracted through their senses and perceptions to create meaning. The extracted cues vary depending on the individual personal dispositions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>If the signs are positive, how does this affect you?</th>
<th>Retrospective social activity</th>
<th>The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enactive of sensible environments</td>
<td>Asking the participants about how they were affected by an environmental influence or the resulting internal adjustment that occurred is a focal point of enactment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If the signs are negative, how does this affect you?</td>
<td>Retrospective social activity</td>
<td>The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enactive of sensible environments</td>
<td>Asking the participants about how they were affected by an environmental influence or the resulting internal adjustment that occurred is a focal point of enactment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Think about a time when a teacher has been either resistant or defiant. How might you respond to them in that situation? Retrospective social activity

The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.

Extracted cues

The teacher leader was asked to make sense from the extracted cues to determine resistance of defiance of followers.

Enactive of sensible environments

When asking about the response to that resistance or defiance the aim is on the enactment process and the adjustment that occurred.

8. What might be some factors that can make it more difficult to approach a teacher? Retrospective social activity

The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.

Plausibility over accuracy

Human interaction is complex and asking someone to analyze variables that could cause an effect on an interaction is centered on the plausibility characteristic.

Grounded in identity construction

The hub of this question was in the role or identity of the teacher leader.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Retrospective social activity</th>
<th>Plausibility over accuracy</th>
<th>Grounded in identity construction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. What might be some factors that can make it easier to approach a teacher?</td>
<td>The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.</td>
<td>Human interaction is complex and asking someone to analyze variables that could cause an effect on an interaction is centered on the plausibility characteristic.</td>
<td>The hub of this question was in the role or identity of the teacher leader.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Reflect on a few colleagues that have been most helpful to you as a teacher leader. What might be some behaviors that you found helpful?

Retrospective social activity
The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.

Ongoing
The multiple enactments of interactions with others over time and the ongoing process of sensemaking that occurred over time was the emphasis of this question.

Extracted cues
The central point of this question was the behaviors or cues most helpful to the teacher leader. How they perceived and filtered their past experiences or cues to see a picture of the interactions will determine how they respond.
II. Reflect on a few colleagues that have been least helpful to you as a teacher leader. What might be some behaviors that you found unhelpful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retrospective social activity</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Extracted cues</td>
<td>The central point of this question was the behaviors or cues most helpful to the teacher leader. How they perceived and filtered their past experiences or cues to see a picture of the interactions will determine how they respond.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**12.** When you think about teacher leaders in general, what might be some qualities that lead to positive interactions with colleagues?

**Retrospective social activity**

The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.

**Enactive of sensible environments**

Asking about behaviors that have led to positive interactions of followers is spotlighting the environmental influence of the teacher leader on others and the enactment and adjustments that occurred.

**Plausibility over accuracy**

When asking a teacher leader about their impact on others, one cannot obtain a definite accurate answer without asking the followers for their perspective. Thus, the response will be a plausible reply.

---

**13.** The next set of questions will focus on specific colleagues and the interactions you have with them on an ongoing basis:
a. Think about 1-2 colleagues that you have had ongoing positive interactions with. Tell me how the relationship developed over time.

Retrospective social activity

The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.

Ongoing

The multiple enactments of interactions with others over time and the ongoing process of sensemaking that occurred over time was the emphasis of this question.

Enactive of sensible environments

The interactions of the teacher leaders and their followers is the core of the Enactive of Sensible Environments characteristic. In these interactions enactments, adjustments and new meaning occur on an ongoing basis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b. Think about 1-2 colleagues that you have had ongoing difficult interactions with. Tell me how the relationship developed over time.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retrospective social activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enactive of sensible environments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. If I were a teacher moving into a teacher leadership role, what advice would you give me about interacting with colleagues?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Retrospective social activity</th>
<th>The question asked the participant to look backward in time on social activity regarding the role of a teacher leader.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Grounded in identity construction</td>
<td>The focus of acting in the role or identity of the teacher leader was the emphasis of the question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plausibility over accuracy</td>
<td>The nature of this question does not produce a definite accurate answer. Thus, the response will be a reasonable and plausible reply</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H

Lead Teacher Application Form

Purpose:
To use a Distributed Leadership model to assist in the full implementation of adopted elementary programs.

Roles/Responsibilities:
- Develop understanding of how program looks at grades 1-5
- Be point person for staff regarding resource needs and assist in organization of program materials
- Seek out new online resources for teachers
- Identify professional development needs to help implement the program
- Model the usage of common planning templates for the subject area
- Collaborate in development of cross-curricular projects
- Assist Curriculum Coordinator in creation of agenda for curriculum days
- Academic Council Member
- Maintain positive relationships with colleagues

To apply, please complete the following and submit to principal (digitally or physically):

Name __________________________

Years Teaching Experience ____________________

1. What subject(s) are you applying for? Please check all that apply:
   < ☐ English Language Arts
   < ☐ Math
   < ☐ Social Studies
   < ☐ Science

2. Why are you interested in this position?

3. What previous experience do you have that qualifies you for this position?

4. What qualities do you possess that would make you successful in this position?

5. In which grades do you have experience teaching? Please check all that apply:
   < ☐ K
   < ☐ 1
   < ☐ 2
   < ☐ 3
   < ☐ 4
Appendix I

Data Supporting Subthemes 1.1-1.4

Subtheme 1.1: Desire to Fulfill Expectations

This subtheme addresses the myriad of pressures and expectations that teacher leaders experience within their role. Throughout the interviews, there were 97 references to this subtheme. The data will be presented in the following 6 data sets:

- Self-imposed Expectations
- Desire for Interactions to be Perceived as Important and Worthwhile
- Worries about Respecting the Time of Colleagues
- Desire for Interactions to be Perceived as Captivating
- Lack of Self-Confidence
- Expectation to Answer All of the Questions Posed by Colleagues

Significant Direct Quotations from Interview Data Supporting Subtheme 1.1

Self-imposed Expectations
The following data set addresses the self-imposed expectations that teacher leaders place upon themselves during interactions with colleagues.

- I definitely put some pressure on myself and I want to involve everybody and so I definitely ... I can be self-critical sometimes. And I'll take work home and go around in my brain about like, "Should I have done this or said this or asked for this." Yeah, I totally do that.
- I think if I feel pressured to get something done, like if we really wanna make sure we've chosen these power standards. Or, teachers are asking about this a lot, or will we be able to do this in the time we have?
- I think I got nervous at first 'cause I have that role and I wanted to make sure I had everything together. And then, I also felt a little pressured to follow how others had been doing the meetings.

Desire for Interactions to be Perceived as Important and Worthwhile
The following data set reveals that teacher leaders desire their interactions with colleagues to be perceived as worthwhile. Participants expressed anxiety that the interaction would not be viewed as being important.

- They probably didn't have the feelings that I thought they were gonna have in the first place, like maybe most of them are not concerned about having other things to do. They're fine with being there.
- I also always get a little nervous that they might feel like they have other things they need to be working on and kind of that, they don't want to spend time talking more about this, but ... So yeah, I'm nervous.
- It's difficult for me to ... 'cause I feel like I'm having to prove that it's important for us to be there.
- I had kind of been forewarned that maybe some of the teachers weren't going to be that excited about adopting a new curriculum, and so I was obviously nervous, 'cause I'm not
a big fan of when people don't like to hear what I have to say, or questioning me, or just having a bad attitude about something.

- I get nervous only in that they might not feel what I have to say is worth being there.
- I also think sometimes in different schools, in different situations, you do get put into meetings that you think are kind of pointless; and you don't want to be creating that pointless meeting.
- If they start to look disinterested in some way, I would try to figure out, why is this not important to them?
- That's taking teachers away from what they wish they could be doing, that was a higher priority to them.

**Worries about Respecting the Time of Colleagues**
The following data set demonstrates the value that teacher leaders place on time and their worry about respecting the time of their colleagues during interactions.

- I know as a teacher that time is precious and we always have other things we want to be doing or we think we need to be doing.
- To value their time and not have meetings that are just to have a meeting because you're supposed to, but to make sure that you're prepared and that you have thought through what's gonna be most beneficial, what's the most beneficial use of time.
- You want to feel like you're using people's time wisely because you know your time hasn't always been used wisely based on other meetings that you've been in.
- I felt like we all should've talked to everyone first. Now I feel like I might be wasting their time because if they're already past the point of what I'm trying to explain to them; then they're thinking, "Well, why are we doing this? I already finished it."
- If it's just a meeting and it's like an informational presentation, then it's kind of like, "Oh, okay, well, I hope we at least used our time wisely."
- Again, am I wasting their time?
- I'm constantly like, "What time is it? We have two more minutes on this. We need to finish that. I'm very time conscious, because I really don't want anyone to have their lunch interrupted.

**Desire for Interactions to be Perceived as Captivating**
The following data set discloses that teacher leaders desire their interactions with colleagues to be captivating. Participants expressed the anxiety they experience during interactions, as they fear that the interaction will not captivate their colleagues.

- I feel like sometimes teachers and even teacher leaders feel pressured to be edutainers. Where we ... It's just got to be great and awesome and lively or it's just no good. And sometimes there is just a business that's got to get done.
- I get nervous that I feel like they're all not paying attention or don't care, but that doesn't happen very often.
- I just always hope that I can keep the momentum and the inertia of the session going so that it doesn't feel like torture.
- I took it as feedback for me that I needed to make things more interactive. Or get them up and moving around in small groups. Maybe I shouldn't have done it whole-group.
• I mean you can't just stand up there and start blabbing and think that everyone's gonna be hanging on your every word.

**Lack of Self-Confidence**
The following data set exposes the lack of self-confidence that teacher leaders experience in relation to interactions with colleagues.

- Shy... just feeling like they want to learn or need to learn or that they have. That I have something to offer them.
- Generally, nerves, just naturally. You get a little bit nervous about, "Am I gonna clearly explain myself? Are they gonna think I'm being stupid? Am I wasting their time?"
- I always feel nervous.
- Some of the other lead teachers are very, very, very prepared and have these huge Power Points and visual aids. I've been working on that.
- But, when they're your peers and you're on the same level, it's a lot more nerve-wracking.
- I've had moments where I'm like, "Do you want me to shut up? Is that what's going on?"

**Expectation to Answer All of the Questions Posed by Colleagues**
The following data set points towards an expectation that teacher leaders feel they should be able to answer all of the questions that their colleagues have for them.

- I'm actively learning to make peace with that, I think. Because yeah, educators like to know stuff. Like to feel “in the know” and when you're a leader, people look to you for answers and sometimes you just don't.
- Lots of time they ask me stuff I don't even know the answer to, so it gives me a homework task.
- I need to make sure I do this and follow up with these things, questions that teachers have, because I don't wanna drop the ball on them.

**Subtheme 1.2: Navigating Challenging Interactions**

This subtheme illustrates some of the challenging interactions that teacher leaders have with colleagues. Throughout the interviews, there were 60 references to this subtheme. The data will be presented in the following 5 data sets:

- Examples of Challenging Interactions
- Open Communication
- Don’t Take it Personally
- Open to New Ideas
- Be Direct

**Significant Direct Quotations from Interview Data Supporting Subtheme 1.2**

**Examples of Challenging Interactions**
The following data set unveils some of the challenging interactions that teacher leaders have experienced.

- They don't want to take the time to have the discussion about the important topic that we're going through, or they think that they have it figured out and they don't want to
change, I would say, kind of stuck in their ways and don't want to improve based on what we're talking about.

- There was definitely a moment, where I was trying to communicate some differences of perspective on a question that our school had; and me going from one teacher's perspective to another teacher's perspective was more or less communicating ineffectively that we needed to be pulling those ideas together rather than me bouncing and ping ponging around.
- And then there are people that will challenge your thinking and I think that you have to be open to that.
- The teacher was getting very tense in general about feeling the meeting was more about placing blame than looking for solution. And so, some of the strategies were very quickly shot down, and the tone of the meeting, from this teacher especially was getting kind of heated.
- I've seen some teachers who are like, "I've been doing this a while and I've got to make sure it stays this way, even though I hear other members of the team saying, "Well, is this working, is this working? Could we try this?"
- I'm not good with conflicts so when people are really against something, or really don't want to do it, how to word it…
- 'Cause, one would even say, "Oh, I'm not doing that" and it was frustrating.
- Sometimes we disagree and we argue about things but not in a bad way.

Open Communication
The following data set shows how open communication is used as a response in the midst of challenging interactions.

- But, if they're willing to sit down and figure out where both parties are coming from and come to a conclusion together; that's in the best interest of students and everyone, then I think that's the easiest.
- I quickly realized that that was creating more tension than needed to be there and that this question needed to just come off the table and the next time the wagons were circled, put it back out there so I wasn't the messenger, I was the facilitator, but they had a chance to talk together. I realized I just need to communicate that more openly and everyone together.
- And so just to remind them, "Don't worry, we're not standing the whole time and here's the door prizes and there really is a reason for doing this." And by the end, I could tell that they realized what the purpose was.
- We usually come to a better conclusion. "I think this. You think this." We go back and forth.

Don’t Take it Personally
The following data set addresses that teacher leaders use a mental mindset of “Don’t Take It Personally” to manage their reaction during challenging interactions.

- To make it interesting and to make it exciting; and to not take it personally. To never lose sight of yourself as a teacher
- So rather than making it one person pushing against another, I'd rather kinda just open it up. There's nothing to be pushing against.
- I would say, not to take things so personally 'cause not everyone is going to respond to you the way you want to and you can't let it affect you personally. If they… more they
don't want to be there and they don't want to do it, it doesn't really matter who you are. Sometimes there are some people that… that is just the way it is. They don't want to be there. It doesn't matter who you are, so don't take that too personally.

- I usually just have to get out of my own head and be like, "Okay, I planned for this. I prepared for this. This is all important. There's a reason why we're here, and I just have to get focused again.

Open to New Ideas
The following data set shows how being open to new ideas helps teacher leaders navigate challenging interactions.

- So, if somebody challenges your thinking, you've got to be really open to that and be ready to anticipate, "Hey that may be the way to go, but you guys think about that."
- So, I feel like I can keep my cool and if I feel like a teacher's responding that way, I'm like, "Hey, that's fine, I'm not directing your class, you get the decision at the end of the day but at the end of the day, you're the one who's going to have to do whatever it is, because next to their mother, you're the most important person in that kid's life. So, I'm not trying to tell you what that looks like, you'll decide. You hate my ideas, I'm not married to any of them. What do you think? What else can you try?" So, try to deescalate and just say, "I'm here to help, what should we do?"
- And so, the first thing I thought was, "Okay. I'll ask her questions about this." So, I said, "Well, I'd love to know more about that, the research, I'd love to see that."
- I was really interested in her perspective, even though it came across as like, she just put up a brick wall. And instead of trying to argue with her or say something, I just said, "Send me the research. I'd love to hear more about that."

Be Direct
The following data set displays how being direct is used as a response in the midst of challenging interactions.

- Well, you do have to do this because these are the requirements of every homeroom teacher. Sometimes those situations are uncomfortable but ... I have had mostly good experiences.
- I tried to explain, "Guys this is going to affect me". I even say, “I'm responsible, we want to sit down.” I try and offer ways you want to sit down and do it together.
- Do I need to have more side conversations with that person?
- For the more talkative people, during a meeting I might say, "It looks like you have something great to say." So, I'll try to hear what they have to say, instead of ... “Did I answer that question?”

Subtheme 1.3: Awareness of Colleague’s Reaction During an Interaction

This subtheme describes the ability of teacher leaders to perceive the reactions of their colleagues in the midst of an interaction. Throughout the interviews, there were 40 references to this subtheme. The data will be presented in the following 5 data sets:

- General Methods Used for Observing Cues
- Positive Cues Observed in Colleagues
- Teacher Leader Reaction to Positive Cues
• Negative Cues Observed in Colleagues
• Teacher Leader Reaction to Negative Cues

**Significant Direct Quotations from Interview Data Supporting Subtheme 1.3**

**General Methods Used for Observing Cues**
The following data set describes the general methods used by teacher leaders when observing cues in their colleagues that will indicate how the person is reacting to the interaction.

- You need to pay attention to the mood of the room and the tone of what's going on.
- I'm usually trying to gauge energy level. I feel like, hopefully like deep into the conversation, or the activity or whatever's going on; but I'm also trying to like, "How are you doing? How's the climate? Are you fading? Are people communicating? Which voices are really being active and are being more passive?" I'm trying to be a little extra observant.
- Body language, eye contact, posture, if they're responding to questions or sharing ideas, things like that.
- Maybe just looking out at the rest of them and see that they're into it.
- I mean, just watching how they're interacting with each other.
- Watching the hands, the face. I look for their facial gestures. Yeah, how they're moving. And some are just verbal and, they'll say yes or no if they like something.
- So, it's reading them to figure out where to also go for the rest of the meeting.
- People paying attention. Body language, facial expressions, but are they actively engaged with what I'm saying? Do they seem interested?
- body language, facial expressions, tone of voice

**Positive Cues Observed in Colleagues**
The following data set reveals the positive cues that teacher leaders have observed in their colleagues which indicate the person is having an overall positive reaction to the interaction.

- Or, are they laughing with their neighbor that they couldn't figure out how to do the math... the sample math problem that I gave them, or are they asking questions, that kind of thing.
- People said, "I really understand what you're trying to get through to us. We really feel like we could use this in our classrooms. It could benefit."
- I think it really depends on how people react. I've taught a workshop based on how to use different strategies in the classroom, and if people leave the workshop going, "Oh, I really understand what you're saying. I really like this, I want to use this."
- Teachers who are as expressive as I am, that's my love language, that's how I know that we're in the groove.
- When a teacher's like, "Can we please meet, can we please talk about this?" Or like, "When will you be in your office?"
- To have the conversations flowing and see respond and get involved.
- they're smiling and they're following along
- who's actually paying attention
- But, if everything is going well, and people are, we're making progress and we're having good conversations.
if the staff or everyone's more engaged and they seem really into it
If people respond and ask questions.

Teacher Leader Reaction to Positive Cues
The following data set discloses the immediate reactions that teacher leaders have after becoming aware of the positive cues from their colleagues, in the midst of an interaction.
- nervousness subsides when I get in there and I see that they're interacting
- that makes you feel like, "Okay, I'm actually helping them in some way."
- It makes me feel good of course.
- Yeah, I think I would continue in the same way that I was going; and then make more concrete details, hammer out a plan, go forward with what I'm thinking about.
- Oh, it's great. It definitely feels good.
- It feels very validating.
- I feel good. I feel good and, I feel like I got my point across and we work together.
- I like positive feedback, like everyone else I think, that I feel like if it's going really well, then I feel like we're going in the same direction; that makes me feel good about where we're going, and I feel like we're accomplishing things.
- If they seem interested, then I'm good to keep going.
- It makes me more comfortable sharing, and it makes me not only more comfortable, but willing to go into more detail and engage in conversation.

Negative Cues Observed in Colleagues
The following data set uncovers the negative cues that teacher leaders have observed in their colleagues that indicate the person is having an overall negative reaction to the interaction.
- I mean, are they checking their e-mail on their computer or are they doing stuff on their computer while I'm talking? Are they having side conversations about other things?
- Body language has a lot to do with it. If they start to do something else, if they start to look disinterested in some way, I would try to figure out, why is this not important to them?
- Or, if they're starting to move back a little bit, maybe I'm explaining something that's a little too far of a step for them. Maybe they're not ready for that yet. Maybe that's overwhelming. Kind of paying attention to more of what's going on with their body than necessarily their voice, 'cause that's semi-obvious, depending on the person.
- Like if a teacher seems like they're just not responding; and I'm wondering if they're not feeling it.
- If they were on their computers, doing something else, or if I didn't feel that they were participating.
- Like who's grading papers or doing something else?
- If teachers are having lots of side conversations.
- Well the big thing is crossing your arms.
- Sometimes people's bodies go back a little bit and that you hear it in their tone of voice.

Teacher Leader Reaction to Negative Cues
The following data set illustrates the immediate reactions that teacher leaders have had upon becoming aware of the negative cues in their colleagues, in the midst of an interaction.
• I just start talking faster. I get nervous, I start sweating, I get flustered. I forget what I'm doing and I start overcompensating, just explaining too much. Trying to prove this is important and then it just kind of falls apart.
• I try to ask and I feel like in a group discussion, it's good to try to pull other voices in when there are definitely some stronger ones.
• I'm like, I got to get them going because maybe they're not into it; or I'm going to send them to go do a task. And that's like thinking off the spot. Say, okay, so now you have the next 20 minutes to go do this with your team member; upload it to drive.
• I get frustrated.
• If I feel like they're not... then I'm like, "Eh, can I finish this quicker for you? 'Cause you don't care, so it's like..."

Subtheme 1.4: Humility and Vulnerability

This subtheme exemplifies the traits of humility and vulnerability that are demonstrated by teacher leaders during interactions with colleagues. Throughout all of the interviews, there were 32 total references to this subtheme. The data will be presented in the following 3 data sets:
• Facilitator Role Instead of Heroic Leader
• Humility
• Courage to be Vulnerable

Significant Direct Quotations from Interview Data Supporting Subtheme 1.4

Facilitator Role Instead of Heroic Leader
The following data set uncovers the common thread relating to how teacher leaders describe their leadership style. Instead of assuming the traditional role of heroic leaders, they view their teacher leadership role as more of a facilitator during their interactions with colleagues.
• Whatever subject you're leading... and then having a positive attitude and you don't feel like you're above anybody; that you're with them on the same team working through it together.
• You're not gonna tell them what to do. You're just there to help organize things. You're just there to help facilitate the conversation, not putting yourself above.
• Here, I would say my leadership position is just being the person to organize. We're all on the exact same level. I am just the one who's kind of like, "Okay, this is our topic. Let's talk." I'm the introducer. I'm the one who takes notes; but I wouldn't say that I'm above anyone. I'm not having to check anything. I'm not telling them what to do.
• You have to learn to accept that's it's not always about knowing everything; but about bringing people together and posing the questions that can look for ideas. Maybe not even the answer, but ideas that can guide that question into the direction it needs to go.
• I want them to feel like I'm their co-worker and I'm just leading and I'm there to help and not directing. It's just like how teaching has changed. We're not doing whole group anymore, the teacher talking to people. You're supposed to be splitting up and differentiating and doing small groups.
• I usually tend to say, "This is what we need to talk about and do you guys have anything else we need to talk about?" and just keep it organized and on task.
• Their opinions and thoughts and suggestions are just as valuable; and it's my job to kind of bring them together and create something.

**Humility**
The following data set demonstrates how teacher leaders act with humility during their interactions with colleagues.

• I don't think that you can just walk in and feel like you know more than everybody else, or feel like you're there to fix anybody's teaching, or teach them something they definitely don't know.
• But, they would just see me as someone kind of on the same level; as I'm a peer who just maybe has a couple more years of experience.
• I would say first of all, just try to keep yourself on the same level as them. Every time I've been a leader in anything, even as a teacher, I've never tried to put myself above everyone else.
• I think part of that is me taking that step back and just saying, "Hey that's fine, you guys lead the way; I know I'm new in town.
• When you were asking about what are the good qualities for a lead teacher, would be thinking for the better need of the school. 'Cause sometimes you got to leave your ego and maybe someone else might need to do that job for the better of the school; and have those ideas and organization skills. So, for the best of the school.
• You are on the same playing field as all the other teachers. You are all teachers and so just acknowledging that I am a teacher.
Appendix J

Data Supporting Subthemes 2.1-2.4

Subtheme 2.1: Reflecting to Guide Future Interactions

This subtheme focuses on the reflections that teacher leaders make in order to guide their leadership practice. Throughout the interviews, there were 59 references to this subtheme. The data will be presented in the following 3 data sets:

- Asking Colleagues for Feedback
- Seeking to Understand Root
- Self-Reflections

Significant Direct Quotations from Interview Data Supporting Subtheme 2.1

Asking Colleagues for Feedback

The following data set provides examples of teacher leaders asking for feedback from their colleagues in order to guide future interactions.

- Curiosity. I always love to hear feedback. Whatever it is, constructive, positive, definitely some eagerness to know like, "What's the next step? How did we do today? Are people feeling like they got some resolution to questions they had? Are there lingering questions? Was that an ungodly waste of time? What's the climate, how are people feeling?"
- You do it as a service to your team, so you hope that it benefited the team. Like to know, like did we go in the steps that we needed to go, in the right direction? How did it feel?
- It's helpful to see when teachers give you feedback and just say, "Hey, remember what we talked about, like we tried this. This worked well. I want to do this a little bit differently." That's been really helpful just getting feedback.
- I like to hear if I did a good job or a bad job so usually looking like, how did it go today and ask someone how ... I'm like a first grader… “How do you think today went?” I ask people who I feel closer with, my fellow lead teachers, I'll ask how do you think today went?
- I think there were a lot of things that were confusing, so I liked having that feedback from teachers. Like this is what we need to do, thank you. So, I liked having that feedback that I helped guide them in the process.
- So that's like feedback for me for the next one. Which recently, the past few that I've led, I try to do small group because I feel it goes a lot better when we break up into groups than keeping it all-group.
- I think that I really value teachers who have the kids in mind. And so, that if I feel uncomfortable about something, or a meeting didn't go the way I want it to go, kind of go talk to that teacher, but with the “this is about the kids” kind of thing. And it's very clearly not a gossipy thing, but it's, "What did you see in this meeting that I didn't see?"

And I think in particular, last year there was a great colleague, who was really good at having a different perspective, and was super empathetic to see what was going on. And so, she was always a really good person to talk to, like "What did you think was going
on?" And I think when I'm leading meetings, it's sometimes hard to be seeing what's happening in different parts of the room sometimes.

• I think it's always good to have a partner, or have someone that you can kind of be like, "What did you see in that meeting?"

**Seeking to Understand Root**
The following data set offers examples of teacher leaders seeking to understand the root of issues, situations, and colleagues’ perspectives.

• Generally, people have an opinion based on something, based on a previous experience, based on a fear, but it's coming from somewhere, so really trying to figure out where that's coming from, why they have that opinion or why they have that concern, whatever, and then going from there, instead of just making a judgment right away. "Okay, what's actually going on here? What's the root of this?" Then, you can work to solve that problem.

• Okay, take a step back. What is it that they're worried about? What is it that they're pulling away about?" And then figure out, maybe they need more support. Maybe there's something that we need to change in this so that they're not feeling frustrated or overwhelmed or like it's wasting their time or whatever.

• Try to figure out what the root of the problem is at that point, and if there's not a solution, then, "Okay, let's think about this and we'll come back, and then make sure that we talk about it later."

• I think, again, it all comes back to the same philosophy that I have: figuring out why they're resistant or defiant. Is it that they don't want to do work? Is it that they feel that it's not best for their students? What is going on? Why are they pushing back so much? Because there's something behind that. It's probably not just that they're being lazy, and if it is, then maybe it's too much work. Maybe it's that we're overwhelming them and they physically can't do that much. Try to figure out what's going on.

• I ultimately spoke with another leader and just asked for a little bit more information about the teacher and like, "What's their background and where are they coming from?"

• But, I also try to see things from their perspective, and try to figure out what's going on, and is that person really stressed about something else that's going on? Or, are we doing something wrong?

• I think continuing to ask questions, and finding out what's going on, and understanding someone's perspective, is the biggest thing.

• And if someone has a different perspective, to ask why they have that and where that came from, and to try to bring that into the conversation.

• But, then also I try to think, "What can I ... What is going on and how can I try to get myself out of this situation? So-and-so is feeling bad, what do they need?"

• Is this teacher really preoccupied with other things and isn't getting it?

**Self-Reflections**
The following data set reveals the habit of teacher leaders to self-reflect on their interactions with their colleagues.

• I felt like maybe I hadn't thought ahead of what they needed, or maybe I was thinking they needed something when they were already past that point.
• I wish I had a little bit more background information before I had started, because I felt like they were going off track because I wasn't necessarily gauging it towards exactly what they needed at that time.
• I should've checked in with everybody before we decided to do this as our meeting.
• I wish I had planned this out better. I wish I had communicated with people better before I started this.
• I sort of like say, you know I should have prepared better... I should have ... You know, you go through in your head but, at the same time it's also my feedback and I know what to switch for the next time.
• It's like when you have a lesson and it doesn't go the way you wanted to and you're like, I totally thought that they were going to get this, and you got to go back and re-teach. It's... you're teaching adults.
• I was trying to think about what has changed or evolved, and I can't, I think I just understand. I think people are more settled and understand what they're supposed to be doing.
• And I understand that there was more to that, and there was more to that perspective, but I felt like, am I doing this wrong? We're not really having the conversation I wanted to have.
• It wasn't about having a right or wrong answer, and maybe I could've emphasized it's not about we have to have the same thing.

Subtheme 2.2: Strategic Approaches to Support

This subtheme uncovers the strategic approaches that teacher leaders use in order to successfully support their colleagues. Throughout the interviews, there were 53 references to this subtheme. The data will be presented in the following 3 data sets:
• Assessing Colleagues’ Needs
• Providing Purpose
• Subtle Strategies

Significant Direct Quotations from Interview Data Supporting Subtheme 2.2

Assessing Colleagues’ Needs

The following data set demonstrates how teacher leaders are consistently assessing their colleagues’ needs in order to provide the most relevant and appropriate level of support.
• I think having lots of ways for people to voice their opinions and get things out that they need to talk about or figure out.
• I would ask, "How can I help you? What can I do? Do you want me to come teach it? Do you want to see me do it?" I am very hands-on when I help people. I like to actually... "I know how to teach, and I can come in the room and teach it for you and support you in the planning." and things like that. "I will do it for you so you can see why we like it."
• And also, "What are your specific issues?" Address them specifically, not just, "I don't want to do it, I don't like it." "Okay, why? Give me really specific things that I can help you with." because just, "I don't like it, I don't want to." is not specific enough. I can't help you if that's what you say to me.
• find out where people are coming from and what they really need. So, do they need something just taken care of really quickly? Do they need to understand something better? So, I think really figuring out what teachers need.
• Some of them feel a little unsure and they want guidance; and then others feel like they know what they're doing and they just want to come and interact and share what they know.
• I think the Zen masters; the interaction looks more like me going to them. It's more like they tend to be like, "Of course, my doors always open, come and go." So, I don't always feel the urgency from them, but that doesn't mean that we don't interact. It's more give and take, ebb and flow.
• So, people who have been here for a long time and are used to things, than people who are brand new. So, they're all going to need different levels of guidance and have different questions. Some might have a hundred questions, some might be like yeah, I know what to do.

Providing Purpose
The following data set addresses how teacher leaders provide the intended purpose of initiatives as a strategic approach to supporting their colleagues.
• Just kind of talking to them about comparing ... The reason why we were changing curriculum and the benefits of it; and how it was following more along with what we were trying to teach with the standards; and how the other one was really making it more difficult, because we were having to teach so many more things with the same amount of time and not really get that foundation; and how it is a new curriculum and you have to do it and you have to learn something new; but that overall, it was gonna be beneficial and worth the stress of changing.
• And by the end, I could tell that they realized what the purpose was.
• I wanna stop it and then bring them back to what the purpose is. Sometimes people have other things; people are not engaged in the purpose maybe.

Subtle Strategies
The following data sets shows other subtle approaches that teacher leaders use when seeking to support their colleagues.
• If there's anything that I feel needs to be added to it, or suggestions, to just be very subtle with how I do that; to kind of make it seem like it's their idea.
• You don't want them to feel you're being condescending or come across in a negative way. So, it's a lot easier when it's in a team; and so that way you can kind of direct your statements towards their partner and that way it's a group effort, instead of just one-on-one with that person.
• I think I've learned that there are some conversations that you have as a team and there are some conversations that you have one-on-one. And which people you have those conversations with... and when you need to know when you need to talk to your boss about things that you should know before you talk to the team or certain individuals. Things like that. I think I'm learning the rules of the road for things like that.
• Sometimes you have to know that balance and when to do too much or not enough.
• But, now it's more like I'm respecting how things are, but also asking some questions and me encouraging them to talk a little bit more with each other.
• I try and offer ways you want to sit down and do it together. Break it apart together; and we did end up getting a pull-out one day and actually worked on things.

Subtheme 2.3: Interacting with Diverse Team Personalities

This subtheme addresses the reality that teacher leaders interact with a team of colleagues who have diverse personalities. Throughout the interviews, there were 38 references to this subtheme. The data will be presented in the following 3 data sets:

- Reflecting on Colleagues’ Personalities and Background
- Experiences Interacting with Outspoken Colleagues
- Experiences Interacting with Timid Colleagues

Significant Direct Quotations from Interview Data Supporting Subtheme 2.3

Reflecting on Colleagues’ Personalities and Background
The following data set exhibits how teacher leaders reflect on the personalities and backgrounds of their colleagues and acknowledge the need to differentiate interactions.

• I've been a leader in school, all different areas, and it's just about talking to people, figuring out people at the end of the day, I would say.
• I feel like every single person I interact with, you have to act a little differently as their leader and their friend. Some people, I can be supporting them on a leadership role and just be joking around with them at the same time, and it's fine. That's our dynamic together and it all works out great. And others need it to ... I don't know. They need more professional. You have to be more serious all the time.
• I would say, I generally try to adjust to who I'm talking to, as most people do.
• Just be flexible in the way you interact with people. You just need to be flexible. You need to be able to interact with different people differently; and the way that they need you to interact with them and what they want from you.

Experiences Interacting with Outspoken Colleagues
The following data set presents the experiences of teacher leaders interacting with outspoken colleagues.

• She's amazing, but she definitely ... She doesn't hold anything back; and if she's not happy or she wants something different, she lets you know.
• I think there are people on our staff who are really vibrant, and love to share, and be a part of things. I think there are people who are more, that they're more comfortable with conflict, and so they don't mind having a conflict in a meeting.
• I think when people are new, and they come on really strong, I'm kind of put off by that sometimes. Because, I think maybe they don't really know our school environment, or where we're at, or we're coming from. And so, I think when people come across really strong then I have to kind of back up and get to know and talk to that person more, on the side, or find out more what they're like, and find out where they're coming from. And usually I over-exaggerated what I think about them at first, because I feel like they wanna change things at our school really fast.
• If someone tends to be more outgoing and more vocal with their opinions, then I'll be more vocal also.
• Sometimes I feel like people who have a lot more experience than me are sometimes harder for me to approach; because I don't want to step on toes and then realize, "Maybe you've been through a situation like this before, and I'm gonna look silly if I'm trying to give you ideas on something that you already know a lot more about than I do."
• If I bring something up in a more timid way and then they come back at me in a more outgoing way, then I would feel kind of like I don't really want to handle this.
• In the past, there have been some personalities that definitely thought that they knew more than anybody that could possibly share something with them; and so it's always difficult to interact with ... difficult for me to interact in meetings like that, because ... like as the leader, because I feel like they're always second guessing what I'm saying; they're looking for ways to prove that whoever's leading is wrong about something. So just kind of more of an arrogant personality.
• Teachers from the past that kind of had negative attitudes about learning something from somebody else; I think mostly with them just... to just listen, to listen to what they're doing right, to how they know a lot about what they're talking about. And then to just kind of maybe, if there's anything that I feel needs to be added to it or suggestions; to just be very subtle with how I do that, to kind of make it seem like it's their idea.
• Someone who's super strict and serious, I might feel more awkward communicating things to them.
• I don't like to argue and she will tell you that she likes to argue. "I like to argue," and I'm like, "Okay." So, I argue with her, and that's how we get to our conclusion, so I do have to mirror her approach to have a productive outcome.

Experiences Interacting with Timid Colleagues
The following data set explains the experiences of teacher leaders interacting with timid colleagues.

• We work really well together, but it's harder to get her involved, the one that more goes with the flow. She doesn't get involved in the decision-making as much, which I'm not sure that she really cares to be involved in the decision-making that much.
• She's just like, "Okay," and sometimes I'm like, "Well, do you want to be involved more? Because I know I would want to be involved more," but I think it's just accepting that perhaps she doesn't feel the need to be involved more and that's okay.
• I think that there are people on our teacher team who have really good things to contribute; but stay quiet in meetings. So, I pay attention, think of those people first, because I wanna make sure their voices don't get left out.
• I respect the passive observers.
• But if someone is a little bit quieter, I might ask 'em some questions and kind of dig a little bit more; to figure out what they're actually thinking instead of just filling the space with my own speech, trying to figure out what they're actually thinking if they're not volunteering those ideas.
• I would say that the quieter personalities tend to come and talk to me more than I thought they would have.
• Some of them who might be a little more unsure about the curriculum or about the best way to teach math, maybe ... I don't know if that's the right way to put it. They might share, "I tried this in my room. How could I do this? Do you think this is a good idea? Is
this what the curriculum was talking about?" Questions like that. Just kind of asking for advice and asking for reassurance that they're doing it the right way, kind of.

- The ones that might need reassurance, I mean, to just look for the good things that they're already doing and point those out to kind of give them more confidence about it.

**Subtheme 2.4: Listening**

This subtheme emphasizes the importance of listening as an approach to leading. Throughout the interviews, there were 22 references to this subtheme. The data will be presented in the following 2 data sets:

- Providing Opportunities for Teachers to be Heard
- Leading by Listening

**Significant Direct Quotations from Interview Data Supporting Subtheme 2.4**

**Providing Opportunities for Teachers to be Heard**

The following data set unveils how teacher leaders seek to provide ongoing opportunities for teachers’ voices to be heard.

- just really listening to people and taking the time; even if you have to go to lunch, making sure that you put in that time
- Generally, I try to think about the person that I'm going to interact with and think about, how do I usually see them being productive? Do I see them being productive by being listened to, or do I see them being productive by having someone do a back-and-forth? What way do I generally see them being successful in a conversation?
- Teachers looking to be heard, teachers who have a lot of ideas, have a lot of creativity. Maybe have some self-doubt, or maybe just want to feel visible. They want to feel like, what I'm doing is part of this school and I want someone who sees the whole school to just ... For no other reason, just to hear what I'm doing and just to know that that's happening and is that okay.
- I would say that the quieter personalities tend to come and talk to me more than I thought they would have. I think they realize that I'm willing to listen and I want to hear their opinion, so they'll come and bounce some ideas off of me.
- If you're going to be a teacher leader, just one of the most important lessons that I've ever taken away is that teachers really want to feel heard. At the end of the day, they may acknowledge that you can do or not do something that they may want or not want; but feeling heard is one of the most important things.
- So, many teachers feel like they don't even have that voice. It's really disempowering, it degenerates the community, the team dynamic, such as just taking time to listen. In a forum, privately, whatever it takes. That's the most essential thing. I would say tip top.
- I think, having lots of ways for people to voice their opinions, and get things out that they need to talk about or figure out.
- I think continuing to ask questions, and finding out what's going on, and understanding someone's perspective is the biggest thing. And also, trying to get voices who are not heard to be heard, even if they don't wanna talk in meetings very much.

**Leading by Listening**
The following data set exemplifies how teacher leaders view listening as an essential aspect of leadership.

- Interviewer: What have you learned about how to lead different types of people?
  Participant: I think it's mostly listening.
- I've done a lot of leadership through high school, through different organizations that I've been to, and I think the number-one thing is just to really make sure that you understand where people are coming from and you listen to them. Generally, people have an opinion based on something, based on a previous experience, based on a fear, but it's coming from somewhere, so really trying to figure out where that's coming from, why they have that opinion or why they have that concern.
- You also have to not be attached to any particular outcome, but you're like ... just sort of surrender and listen. You really have to listen, I would say. Like actively listen, which isn't always easy.
- I think listening is first, foremost. You've got to listen.
- It's important to have an agenda and a time but, it's also important to hear what people have to say and their ideas and not cut them off or what not.
- Be flexible and open to other ideas especially at an international school when you have so many people coming in from ... Some people are coming in from public schools, some people are coming from the States, some people are coming from schools in China or Brazil who've had completely different experiences and they're going to bring new ideas. I think it's worth listening to but, also if it's something you need to stay firm with and you're not ready to change, just say that. But to have an open mind and open ears for them.
- I think that there are people on our teacher team who have really good things to contribute but stay quiet in meetings. So, I pay attention, think of those people first, because I wanna make sure their voices don't get left out.
- I think that the other thing is, to keep seeing people's different perspectives. And if someone has a different perspective, to ask why they have that and where that came from, and to try to bring that into the conversation.
Appendix K

Data Supporting Subthemes 3.1-3.4

Subtheme 3.1: Collaborative Leadership

This subtheme addresses the style of collaborative leadership used by teacher leaders. Throughout the interviews, there were 69 references to this subtheme. This data was generated from all 6 of the interviews. The data will be presented in the following 4 data sets:

- Shared Decision-making
- Collaborative Processes
- Drawn to Collaborative Relationships
- Lack of Collaboration

Significant Direct Quotations from Interview Data Supporting Subtheme 3.1

Shared Decision-making

This data set focuses on the shared decision-making that occurs between teacher leaders and their colleagues. By providing colleagues with a voice in decision-making, teacher leaders are establishing a clear partnership in leading together.

- It can sometimes conflict, because people have had maybe the same program but very different experiences with it, and then you have to come to that agreement on whether or not it’s beneficial.
- So, we were talking about what do we think are the strengths of that program that we don't have in our program here that we would like to pull in; and how could we make those two work together so that we're not getting rid of our program here, but instead we're boosting it with those strategies, or whatever, that come from that other program that we've had interaction with before?
- I would say generally, giving a lot of ideas, putting a lot of ideas out there, up for grabs, and then deciding which ones we think are best, instead of just, "This is what I think, and this is what we should do." Like, "Well, I've tried this, and I've tried this, and this has worked, and this kind of hasn't worked, but let's talk about all of these different things within the context of our school, our students, and then kind of go from there," instead of just giving one solution and that's it, I would say would be the most successful.
- They have to be able to take everyone's input and try to analyze what would be the best solution, not just based on their own opinion, but based on everyone's ideas.
- So, they're listening and then they're open-minded as they're making that decision; and that they're analytical.
- I think having lots of ways for people to voice their opinions and get things out that they need to talk about or figure out. I think that PLC committee has really tried to address people's needs or where they think the direction of grading and assessment needs to go.
- Yes, so a teacher who I think is putting in his or her effort, her effort really, and is helping to make decisions and is taking ownership.
- Sometimes we disagree and we argue about things, but not in a bad way. We usually come to a better conclusion.
• It helps us to move to a better conclusion, better than what I was thinking, better than what she was thinking, something even better.
• And then, their opinions, and thoughts, and suggestions are just as valuable, and it's my job to kind of bring them together and create something.
• If they're willing to sit down and figure out where both parties are coming from and come to a conclusion together, that's in the best interest of students and everyone, then I think that's the easiest.

**Collaborative Processes**
This data set provides examples of collaborative processes between teacher leaders and their colleagues.

• Everyone has valuable ideas, and if you actually listen to them all, it elevates the product you're creating. So, it's being open to change.
• One of my co-workers, one of my grade-level team co-workers, has been really helpful in just the way that if I suggest something, she suggests something back, and we go back and forth.
• I think, when I feel like, we're all on the same side and we're working on this together. And people are excited, and they're adding ideas.
• We're just having a normal dialogue.
• You're with them, on the same team, working through it together.
• People are willing to talk about solutions of problems or open-mindedness.
• It was a lot of bouncing ideas back-and-forth, sharing materials, sharing ideas, and just kind of checking in with each other. "How's everything going? Is there anything you have a question about?"
• I feel like some teachers are adapting more to using technology for communication collaboration, for example. Part of that is our interaction together and part of it is other initiative from the school. Receiving trainings and just being more comfortable; and it's opening up doors of communication that they maybe didn't feel as comfortable with before.
• As long as the standards are being met I'm okay, let's work together at it.
• I would group a few, just in general, that are really collaborative and like the team building. They want to meet and work together and they want to share their ideas. And they want to look at their rubrics and compare rubrics across grade levels.
• There's collaboration in those meetings.
• I want them to feel like I'm their co-worker and I'm just leading and I'm there to help and not directing. It's just like how teaching has changed. We're not doing whole group anymore, the teacher talking to people. You're supposed to splitting up and differentiating and doing small groups.

**Drawn to Collaborative Relationships**
This data set reveals how teacher leaders are drawn to work closely with any colleagues who are collaborative in nature.

• The more collaborative and carefree, we talk more freely. Actually, it's like forms of communication. We might write more through WhatsApp.
• With my collaborative co-workers and other colleagues, especially this year, I've been hanging out more and learning from them, which has been a really cool experience.
• The collaborative and willing-to-work ones, I feel like I'm more comfortable going and talking to them and working on things. Like this year, I feel like there's a lot more flexible and collaborative people. I feel like this year I've had a lot more positive experiences.
• To collaborate and work together. With them, I feel really comfortable.
• This year, I think has been my most collaborative year I would say; 'cause there's at least four or three new teachers that I'm constantly talking with and working on things with.
• It definitely feels good to have the conversations flowing and see response and get involved.
• It makes me more comfortable sharing, and it makes me not only more comfortable, but willing to go into more detail and engage in conversation.

Lack of Collaboration
This data set shares the challenges that teacher leaders experience with those relationships that are lacking collaboration.

• One year, when I just had the one grade level team that didn't want to do much; and I think that we could even say, there is a ... 'Cause one would even say "Oh, I'm not doing that" and it was frustrating.
• The more controlling- I don't think there's really been change. I think I've been more withdrawn. I just have really lowered my interactions in those meetings and with those people.
• There's some teachers who are like, "This isn't done, why isn't this done?" And I think it's interesting that some people want things done and taken care of.
• I think it's unhelpful when people kind of are waiting for things to be done but aren't investing in making it happen. That kind of irritates me. I like to do things together.
• It's harder to get her involved, the one that more goes with the flow. She doesn't get involved in the decision-making as much; which I'm not sure that she really cares to be involved in the decision-making that much.
• Some people are not open to change; or they've decided this is how it should be and it doesn't matter what someone else says or thinks. Once they've decided and they're not open to ideas for how it could be better.
• I would say if people come into something thinking, "I don't want to do this. I don't want to change." They're unwilling to talk about something, then that's the most difficult situation.

Subtheme 3.2: Coaching Relationships

This subtheme focuses on the coaching relationships that teacher leaders have with their colleagues. Throughout the interviews, there were 54 references to this subtheme. The data will be presented in the following 3 data sets:
• Building Confidence in Colleagues
• Personal Satisfaction
• Positive Coaching Relationships
Significant Direct Quotations from Interview Data Supporting Subtheme 3.2

Building Confidence in Colleagues
The following data set uncovers how teacher leaders help to build the confidence in their colleagues through an ongoing coaching relationship.

• “I tried this in my room. How could I do this? Do you think this is a good idea? Is this what the curriculum was talking about?” Questions like that. Just kind of asking for advice and asking for reassurance that they're doing it the right way, kind of.
• The ones that might need reassurance, I mean, to just look for the good things that they're already doing and point those out to kind of give them more confidence about it.
• The ones that didn't seem as sure about the curriculum or just wanted reassurance that they were doing things the right way, to just if I'm observing something that they're doing, like I said, to just give them praise about it and that helps them build their confidence; and so, they seem more confident about things and they'll tell me more of other things that they're ... that they feel like are going well.
• I think the ones that are looking for some visibility or some assurance, are coming from places where they maybe haven't always had that in their professional background. I think there are teachers who have gotten maybe more negative or constructive feedback than positive. And so, they're looking to hear, "Is this okay, is this right, is this good?" There are teachers like that.
• It's nice to see that teacher taking more confidence in her decisions and her planning. It's really nice to see. It's cool. It's really cool to see that empowerment growing,
• I think that making people feel confident about what they're doing; or at least know, if I don't know the answer someone else does.

Personal Satisfaction
The following data set uncovers the personal satisfaction that teacher leaders experience as a result of their coaching relationships.

• just feeling like they want to learn, or need to learn, or that they have ... That I have something to offer them.
• When the person has a positive attitude, and I like it when people come and ask me questions about stuff, because, I mean, it makes me feel good, 'cause they seem to feel like I know what I'm talking about, but also just because I'm passionate about my subject and I like talking about it with them.
• Just that it's been an amazing experience, I feel like. Just getting to ... I like to lead anyway, like in my previous life before here, I had a lot of leadership roles and so I feel like it's really helped me grow as a teacher, but then also gives me that outlet of something that I enjoy doing anyway.
• I'm sure a lot of it is just wanting to feel validated and wanting to know that the work was worth it. You put a lot of time into preparing it. You do it as a service to your team so you hope that it benefited the team.
• I feel like I have a bit of a messiah complex, like there's a best servant in me that likes to try to make the world better and make people ... Like if they have a problem just make it better and that's not always your job as a coach.
• The kids responded to it; I can hand off that strategy and the teacher felt sound to use it and that felt great, okay cool. I can pat myself on the back and say that was my good deed for the day. That felt good.
• I've loved my experience.
• I felt good. I feel good and, I feel like I got my point across and we work together.
• People said, "I really understand what you're trying to get through to us. We really feel like we could use this in our classrooms. It could benefit."
• I feel like one of my favorite successes would probably have to be, a teacher who was struggling with creating some routines. In workshop and just in modeling a few routines like that ... Seeing the children responding to it and seeing the teacher feeling relieved for that.
• I felt really good 'cause some of the teachers actually used the posters that I made for them. They actually hung them in their classroom, so that made me happy; and that's a continued in-the-future good feeling. So, if they actually use the resources that I give, they want them, that contributes.

Positive Coaching Relationships
The following data set provides examples of positive coaching relationships between teacher leaders and their colleagues.
• And so, we sat down and we just started talking through it and I realized that there were some misconceptions about maybe what the standard was asking; so, we just had good dialogue about that, and I felt like they appreciated my help and felt like I knew what I was talking about. And so, since then, we've had lots of conversations about ... When they have a question about something similar to that, then they feel free to come and ask me and we have lots of conversations about standards and how they fit with the curriculum and taking questions on and off tests, that kind of thing.
• I would say, generally, they just come to me as maybe a little bit of advice. "What did you do last year?"
• I went to see these people come up to me and ask me, "Hey, I'm thinking about doing this. What do you think about it? Did you guys do anything like this last year?"... just kind of more opening up than I thought they would.
• I would say part of that nurturing side is they'll come to me especially about trouble cases. "This kid, his mom and dad are getting a divorce, I can tell he doesn't know all his letter sounds yet. What can we do? When you come in and model today, when it's conference time would you read with him?" That kind of thing.
• So, it feels very validating when a teacher's like, "Can we please meet, can we please talk about this?" Or like, "When will you be in your office?" Teachers who are as expressive as I am, that's my love language, that's how I know that we're in groove.
• The teacher at the very beginning was like, "I need a lot of help." And I need a lot of time and I want you to just work with me whenever and however you can. Doors always open, come anytime. Let's get some regular meetings set up. Let's do it."
• They are willing to ask for help. "I can't do this. I need your help to do this." Knowing themselves and being willing to go ask for help has always been ... I feel like creates very positive interactions 'cause I like to help people.
I like to do things for other people, and so when they ask for it, it makes me feel like I'm not forcing something on them. "Do you want this? That's awesome. Let me do it for you or let me help you. Let me show you how to do it."

They specifically ask me, "What do you think about this? Can you help me with this?" And so that's positive for me because I like when people ask for help and ask when they need something.

Just when they have a positive attitude and they want to learn and they want to know more about something, then they can't get me to stop talking about it. So just positive attitude.

**Subtheme 3.3: Sharing Experiences**

This subtheme describes how the relationships between teacher leaders and teacher revolve around sharing experiences. Throughout the interviews, there were 32 references to this subtheme. The data will be presented in the following 2 data sets:

- **Eagerness to Share**
- **Partners in Learning by Sharing Experiences**

**Significant Direct Quotations from Interview Data Supporting Subtheme 3.3**

**Eagerness to Share**

The following data set reflects the eagerness of teachers to share their experiences with one another.

- I get excited about sharing new information with the teachers.
- I'm nervous, but also excited to share information with them.
- But, they also get very excited when they see things working out and they want to tell me about it.
- I'm passionate about my subject, so I like to talk about it whether people want to listen or not; and so, I think that being passionate about whatever your leading is helpful, 'cause maybe that rubs off on people.
- I'm passionate about my subject area and I like talking about it with them.
- "I can't wait to talk about this important stuff or talk about..." That kind of thing.
- I like sharing things I know and ideas that I have and things like that with other people. I really like it in the classroom. I like sharing it with others, so I usually feel good having shared it.

**Partners in Learning by Sharing Experiences**

The following data set provides evidence of the relationship between teacher leaders and their colleagues as partners in learning, as they share their experiences with one another.

- They might share things that are going on in their class that, not so much for reassurance, it's more look what I'm ... Not in a bad way, either, but, "Look what I'm doing. This is working in my class. We can try this." So, it's more giving advice to others or sharing what's going well in their class, not so much reassurance.
- They'll tell me more of other things that they're ... that they feel like are going well.
- Because we have so much experience, a lot of us feel like, "I've done this before. I've tried it. It worked." or, "It didn't work."
• We feel like we know what we're talking about, so a lot of us want to share our experience, which is a good thing; but in some ways, it can sometimes conflict because people have had maybe the same program but very different experiences with it, and then you have to come to that agreement on whether or not it's beneficial.
• I would say generally they just come to me as maybe a little bit of advice. "What did you do last year?"
• The more opinionated personality might say, "Well, I did this last year," and I'll be like, "Well, actually, I did too, so let's talk about it."
• Did you guys do anything like this last year?" …just kind of more opening up.
• There was an interaction I had talking to a colleague about a program that we both previously used successfully that we don't use at this school, but we kind of wanted to pull some bits and pieces. So, we were talking about what do we think are the strengths of that program that we don't have in our program here that we would like to pull in, and how could we make those two work together so that we're not getting rid of our program here, but instead we're boosting it with those strategies.
• Like, "Well, I've tried this, and I've tried this, and this has worked, and this kind of hasn't worked, but let's talk about all of these different things within the context of our school, our students, and then kind of go from there."
• Just kind of that constant communication, making sure that everything's okay, even if it's just a, "Hey, how did that lesson go?" "Good." "Okay. Moving on." Or, "That was terrible. Was it terrible for you too? Okay. It wasn't just me."
• Thank you for sharing that, and maybe there's a nugget of wisdom or value that can then be shared with other teachers that are looking for ideas or support.
• That's my thing. Sharing. It's not supposed to be a hide-and-seek, what are they doing?
• I'll say, "We could really use your input here, I know you have a lot of experience with that."

Subtheme 3.4: A Culture of Learning Together

This subtheme explains the culture of learning that exists in a distributed model of leadership. Throughout the interviews, there were 26 references to this subtheme. The data will be presented in the following 3 data sets:
• Collaboratively Learning Together
• Teacher First, Leader Second
• Leaders Learning from Leaders

Significant Direct Quotations from Interview Data Supporting Subtheme 3.4

Collaboratively Learning Together
The following data set focuses on the relationship of teacher leaders and their colleagues as they collaboratively learn together on an ongoing basis.
• Once they're participating and stuff, then I realize that they're learning and I'm learning and we're interacting together.
• I feel like it has been productive, that I've learned something, that maybe they've learned something; that we're all kind of excited in that moment, how long that lasts, I don't know; but in that moment, I feel like I'm excited that we're gonna try something new.
• I realize that what we're doing is working and the students are growing from it and we're growing, and so I feel like it's an accomplishment.
• Some of them feel a little unsure and they want guidance; and then others feel like they know what they're doing and they just want to come and interact and share what they know.
• I mean I feel like I'm accomplishing something, that we're all learning something, that it's a good experience, that we're all gonna come out of it with something positive.
• And then, I feel like it's helpful when teachers say no. I think it's helpful when teachers say like, "I know my class and my school and what I'm doing with this and I don't feel like that will work. Let's try again. I feel like that's important for me and that's helping me learn the lay of the land.
• But now we have co-dialogue when we present mini-lessons together. The teacher gives me feedback on next steps that she thinks would benefit the children, or scaffolds that we think would help improve the children that may not have been present in the original plans that I designed or co designed with them.
• With my collaborative co-workers and other colleagues, especially this year, I've been hanging out more, and learning from them, which has been a really cool experience.
• I've learned so much about teaching and strategies from Facebook. Watching what other teachers do.
• I've been tested and I'm definitely learning and growing and that's what I came here to do.

Teacher First, Leader Second
The following data set illuminates that teacher leaders view themselves as “teachers first, leaders second”.
• In the past we've all had experiences like that, where there was somebody coming in our room saying, "You're not doing it right. Do it like this." But, they don't even have students. It's more difficult to hear those things from somebody else.
• To remind them, "I'm in your shoes. I also have students. I also have exit tickets to grade. I have all these same things to do, and so here's how we can learn together."
• Having a positive attitude and you don't feel like you're above anybody, that you're with them on the same team working through it together.
• Teacher leadership, you're the teacher first, and then you're a leader, and that's how it should be for all teacher leaders. All teacher leaders should feel that way. You are a teacher first. You're not a leader first. You're the teacher first, and so as a teacher, you need to be open. You are on the same playing field as all the other teachers. You are all teachers, and so just acknowledging that I am a teacher. And then, their opinions, and thoughts, and suggestions are just as valuable, and it's my job to kind of bring them together and create something.
• Seeing yourself as the teacher first and then the leader, so that you never lose sight of where they're coming from.

Leaders Learning from Leaders
The following data set reveals how teacher leaders learn from observing other leaders in the school.
• Obviously, my leaders are awesome. So, I've learned a lot from you. I've learned a lot from my other principal. Learned a lot from our director, just watching their presentation
when they're addressing the team. Just watching their manner, their style. The way they present information in their slides. I'm always watching, I'm very observant and that's really helpful.

- I think being a teacher in meetings with the different teacher leaders has helped me get perspective of what the other teachers are going through when I'm leading a meeting, or whatever. And so, it helps me see it from a teacher's perspective, me being led by another teacher leader, and then just seeing what works, what might not work so well in their meetings and then I can kind of go from that.

- Other lead teachers who are new lead teachers, have come in with a lot of different ideas and I feel a lot more support from some of them.
Appendix L

Data Supporting Subthemes 4.1-4.4

Subtheme 4.1: Trust

This subtheme uncovers trust as the essential ingredient in the relationships between teacher leaders and their colleagues. Throughout the interviews, there were 48 references to this subtheme. The data will be presented in the following 2 data sets:

- Building Relational Trust
- Lack of Trust

Significant Direct Quotations from Interview Data Supporting Subtheme 4.1

Building Relational Trust

The following data set describes how teacher leaders build relational trust with their colleagues.

- If it's a meeting where I end up having to have follow-ups for anything, we need to send a bunch of e-mails, then I think, "I need to make sure I do this and follow up with these things, questions that teachers have, because I don't wanna drop the ball on them."
- The other teacher I would say was skeptical of me in the beginning. I would say that she had a lot of doubts about me in general; about whether I would understand the context, the culture, all the changes that were going on at the school, etcetera. And I feel like it has been a process earning some trust; and one of the best things I could have done for myself was just to co-teach and model teach with that teacher so that she could see that I knew my way around a classroom.
- It's been a process earning the trust, but it's definitely clearly there now. And now it's like colleague-ship. It's really great.
- It's gradually, warmed up when they saw that I wasn't just some revolving in-and-out. Here at the co-op for a year or two and then leaving ... Like some random, "You should change this just for whatever." But now it's more like, I'm respecting how things are, but also asking some questions and me encouraging them to talk a little bit more with each other.
- Making sure that you put in that time so that people trust that you're doing the best thing for students. You're doing the best thing for teachers. They know that you have everyone's best interest at heart, and you put that time in to do the thought process, to do the conversations with them, to make sure that they understand what your goals are, and that's to help everyone in the best way possible.
- It's about building relationships; and of course, the more sound those relationships are, the more teachers are going to trust you with concerns or challenges or just seeking insight.
- So, we just had good dialogue about that, and I felt like they appreciated my help and felt like I knew what I was talking about.
- I feel like that teacher trusts me a lot, values my ideas when we co-create curriculum together.
• I would say that over time ... I don't know if I know exactly how it's happened, but I feel like I'm being welcomed more into the conversation. What's going on with the literature that their using or the strategies that they're teaching.

• I think it's always good to have a partner, or have someone that you can kind of be like, "What did you see in that meeting?" That I think I look for people who I think are professional, and I don't think they're going to go talk to other people, but that they have the purpose of what we're trying to do in mind.

• So, I think I'm very slow to kind of trust, not slow to trust people, but I guess I wanna build relationships, and know what people are like and where they're coming from before I'm gonna trust them with, "How did you think that meeting went? I was really upset about blah, blah, blah." Or, "What did you think about that?"

Lack of Trust
The following data set shares instances when trust is lacking in a relationship between a teacher leader and a colleague.

• So, it's always difficult to interact with ... difficult for me to interact in meetings like that, because ... like as the leader, because I feel like they're always second guessing what I'm saying, they're looking for ways to prove that whoever's leading is wrong about something.

• I think it's unhelpful if I think that I ... If I'm gonna talk to a teacher and I think that it will be kind of passed on, like the telephone game. So, things that are more gossipy, so I don't like gossipy things. I don't think that's a widespread issue here, but I like things to be very professional.

• I think if I say something to someone, and then I hear it come back in another, from another person, in a different way, like the telephone game. Those are interactions that I don't like. And so, those are people that I don't really wanna say too much too, and I wanna be super careful with.

• I feel like they wanna change things at our school really fast.

Subtheme 4.2: Personal Connections
This subtheme provides data regarding the personal connections between teacher leaders and their colleagues. Throughout the interviews, there were 37 references to this subtheme. The data will be presented in the following 4 data sets:

• First Connections
• Friendships- Benefits
• Friendships- Challenges
• Lack of Connection

Significant Direct Quotations from Interview Data Supporting Subtheme 4.2

First Connections
The following data set discovers how teacher leaders make those first connections with colleagues that could potentially develop into a friendship.

• I would say generally when I started off with these people, it was very cordial, very open, trying to establish that relationship; even just a, "How are you? How's your day going?"
kind of those pleasantries that you don't necessarily think are important, but they do start that relationship of being able to be pleasant both in a professional way and in a personal way.

- I feel like just personal rapport. Teachers who ... You've been at a meeting and just casual conversation came up before and after and just some little thing clicked and they just feel more comfortable to keep building that relationship.
- So, I think a colleague who I kind of know their background, and where they're coming from, and that, what they feel is their purpose. And so, knowing people's, I guess their full personalities; but it takes a long time to kind of get to know people very well.
- I would say ongoing positive relationships started off like we were pleasant towards each other and nice and just ... When you meet someone new, you're nice to them and you're pleasant.
- I think ongoing positive relationships sometimes come when you have out-of-school interests that are in common. So, things that are not related to school that you have in common helps build a relationship, and then you also obviously have school in common, and so that builds the relationship even more.

**Friendships- Benefits**
The following data set describes the benefits of developing friendships among teacher leaders and their colleagues.

- I click WhatsApp access to colleagues who became friends; so if there's something that we need to talk about, that's on the fly or outside of work we can communicate that way.
- I ask people who I feel closer with, I'll ask how do you think today went?
- Actually, I feel like more on a friendship level I guess. Most of the people I'm having these positive interactions with are people who I actually might talk to outside of school.
- I feel very comfortable with so, I think it started more on a friendship level even the first few days of school before we got into ... We were just setting up our rooms, we were ... It turned over into a lead teacher-colleague relationship.
- I used to have a bus friend, who is not here right now, and so I used to have daily interaction with her about, just like little assessment things. But it wasn't like we were having a meeting.
- I think there's one person that is more prone to conflict, who I'm good friends with, and so afterwards we kinda joke about it. So that's kind of a nice thing. So, the meeting might sound kind of like there's ... It's not major conflict, it's just definitely two different views, but afterwards we joke about it. So, that's kind of a nice thing, that it's not really ... It's good comradery.
- And I think in particular, last year there was a great colleague, who was really good at having a different perspective, and was super empathetic to see what was going on. And so, she was always a really good person to talk to like, "What did you think was going on?"
- So, I almost think it's easier once you know them better and you're friends. So, it's easier for me in team meetings for me to have more of a leadership role with them, because I'm friends with them and I know them.
- It's easier to approach them when you have a relationship outside of planning and curriculum and teaching, all of that.
When you have a teacher friend that you're close with, that you can talk about that with, and they can kind of be like, "No, this may be what they present. Maybe that's what they were thinking, "or just kind of like," Just because maybe you feel that way, or you feel like that reaction was that, maybe it wasn't." But, I think that's more of having a friend at school, but also helpful as a teacher leader to have a friend at school.

I feel like every single person I interact with, you have to act a little differently as their leader and their friend. Some people, I can be supporting them on a leadership role and just be joking around with them at the same time, and it's fine. That's our dynamic together, and it all works out great.

With teachers that I have a good relationship, I feel like I know what their teaching experience is, so I know where they're coming from; and I know what they value in education; whereas with those other teachers...

If I feel a personal connection, I'm more inspired to work with them.

I think looking for someone this year, because I think it's always good to have a partner, or have someone that you can kind of be like, "What did you see in that meeting?" That I think, I look for people who I think are professional, and I don't think they're going to go talk to other people, but that they have the purpose of what we're trying to do in mind.

I think because then, when you know people a little bit more personally, I think that that helps when you're working with them professionally.

I think it's easier to approach a teacher once you've developed a personal relationship with them.

**Friendships - Challenges**

The following data set uncovers the challenges of developing friendships among teacher leaders and their colleagues.

Personally, in my current situation, it makes it difficult when that teacher is your good friend, because especially if they think differently, then you don't want it to affect your friendship with them and you don't want to come across ... You don't want them to feel you're being condescending or come across in a negative way. So, it's a lot easier when it's in a team and so that way you can kind of direct your statements towards their partner and that way it's a group effort instead of just one-on-one with that person.

Would be one year I had a not-so-motivated fourth grade team and, it was very hard to get them to do anything. And it was difficult, because outside school you're friends but as the lead teacher saying, "Hey guys, I really need you to have your unit planned on and all things being submitted". And it would cause some awkward feelings because, you know, as lead teacher you need to give those responsibilities but, at the same time when you feel like the person's like meh! Maybe they don't take me as serious.

It's easy, but when they're your peers and you're on the same level, it's a lot more nerve wracking. You're a lot more nervous.

So, it's just as a peer. "I'm not in any way ... I'm not your leader or your administrator." It is harder to approach and share when you are both teachers at the same school, and you also have other relationships outside of being in that role, so that affects it as well.

It reminds me of my one year when I just had the one grade level team that didn't want to do much and, I think that we could even say there is a ... 'Cause one would even say "Oh, I'm not doing that" and, it was frustrating. I tried to explain, "Guys this is going to affect me". I even say I'm responsible, we want to sit down ... I try and offer ways you want to
sit down and do it together. Break it apart together, and we did end up getting a pull-out one day and actually worked on things. They said yes to this, as long as I was there to guide them through it. So that was ... But it's frustrating, yeah. And it's awkward. You feel awkward; 'cause it's like you're a friend, you're a co-worker but, you're trying to push them to do something for you.

Lack of Connection
The following data set shares the dynamic of what it is like when teacher leaders are lacking a connection with colleagues.

- I would say generally with people that I have more difficult relationships with, it starts off where the pleasantries aren't necessarily there. It's like very business at first, and it's hard to then develop that further relationship because you feel like every time you talk to them, it's like, "What do you need?" It ends up being this constant work, and you don't feel as open to talk to them, and they don't feel as open to talk to you because you know that it's always business, and you don't necessarily understand each other very well, so you don't understand where each other's coming from. You don't necessarily understand each other's background experience.
- If I haven't had those kinds of conversations, then it's hard for me to understand what their values are, what they're focused on, what their goals are in education; so it's really hard to work towards a common goal if you don't know what their goals are.
- It wasn't really a friend level. I guess, I knew we were different from the beginning and over time it's just been strictly school talk. I don't think I've ever had very many personal conversations with them, not on an intimate level, but even getting to know ... If you were to ask me something about them or their family, I probably wouldn't be able to tell you.
- But, when I don't have a lot of personal relationships with everyone, so it makes it, "I don't really know you that well. I don't know if you even want to hear me say this."

Subtheme 4.3: Positive Relationships Lead to Increase in Interactions

This subtheme illuminates that positive relationships between teacher leaders and their colleagues lead in an increase in interactions. Throughout the interviews, there were 34 references to this subtheme. The data will be presented in the following 3 data sets:

- Increase in Interaction
- High Frequency of In-Person Interactions
- Low Frequency of Digital Interactions

Significant Direct Quotations from Interview Data Supporting Subtheme 4.3

Increase in Interaction
The following data set reveals that positive relationships between teacher leaders and their colleagues lead to an increase in interactions.

- To just give them praise about it and that helps them build their confidence; and so, they seem more confident about things and they'll tell me more of other things that they're ... that they feel like are going well.
• Interviewer: What might be some factors that make it easier to approach a teacher?
Participant: Just when they have a positive attitude and they want to learn and they want to know more about something; then they can't get me to stop talking about it. So just positive attitude.
• We just had good dialogue about that, and I felt like they appreciated my help and felt like I knew what I was talking about. And so, since then, we've had lots of conversations about ... When they have a question about something similar to that, then they feel free to come and ask me and we have lots of conversations.
• E-mail or WhatsApp, I feel like being in the WhatsApp groups; I click WhatsApp access to colleagues who became friends, so if there's something that we need to talk about, that's on the fly or outside of work we can communicate that way.
• I think just teachers feeling more comfortable in general. It's about building relationships and of course, the more sound those relationships are, the more teachers are going to trust you with concerns or challenges or just seeking insight.
• The teacher at the very beginning was like, "I need a lot of help." And I need a lot of time and I want you to just work with me whenever and however you can. Doors always open, come anytime. Let's get some regular meetings set up. Let's do it." And I would say that that relationship has developed over time.
• The more collaborative and carefree, we talk more freely. Actually, it's like forms of communication. We might write more through WhatsApp.
• With my collaborative co-workers and other colleagues, especially this year, I've been hanging out more with people in the upper grades, and learning from them, which has been a really cool experience.
• I've learned, over my years, that, and also through something you do, it's really good to start on positive notes not just jumping right in. I think that makes everybody, even myself, feel better even if we do a congratulations to so-and-so, or even just a thank you, or hey guys ... Just bringing it more on a personal level.
• They are very thankful and they come to you, specifically, to ask you a question, or ask you for your help. They are willing to ask for help. "I can't do this. I need your help to do this." Knowing themselves and being willing to go ask for help has always been ... I feel like creates very positive interactions 'cause I like to help people. I like to do things for other people, and so when they ask for it, it makes me feel like I'm not forcing something on them. "Do you want this? That's awesome. Let me do it for you or let me help you. Let me show you how to do it."
• It makes me more comfortable sharing and it makes me not only more comfortable, but willing to go into more detail and engage in conversation.
• I think it's easier to approach a teacher once you've developed a personal relationship with them.
• But, it's also the way people respond to you, like when you're thankful someone does something for you, or you seek them out and ask for help. But, if you are open about, "I want help. I need help. Come help me.", you're grateful and thankful, it continues. It's just the way people respond. It's your reaction to our interaction.
• So that builds the relationship even more, and it makes it easier to interact with the other person and share ideas and talk to each other about school things; because you've developed more of a well-rounded relationship.
High Frequency of In-Person Interactions
The following data set exhibits the high frequency of in-person interactions that take place among teacher leaders and their colleagues.

- I try to interact with everybody at least once a day while I'm here, but depending on how far we go with that interaction, sometimes it's just a check in; and some it's like we need to have a full meeting to talk about XYZ,
- several times a week
- I feel like there are people that are really personal ... And I feel like that's how I am. If I have something, I might come to you or I might send you an e-mail; but I might feel more on that level... this is something I want to ask face-to-face.
- Because we have the weekly homeroom teacher meeting, I interact, at least that point, weekly with almost all the homeroom teachers. And then, there's usually one or two interactions leading up to that meeting, if it involves someone else, because there's collaboration in those meetings.
- I would say always once-a-week, because of the homeroom teacher meeting, and then maybe, depending on the frequency it could be two to five more times depending on what's happening.
- I think most of the conversations happen in person; but, I remember the first trimester I was out sick and I was getting messages the day I was out sick. Because I told everyone, "Please just send me messages." But, really that would be the only time; because everyone just talks to people in person here.
- I think in person definitely more often.

Low Frequency of Digital Interactions
The following data set exposes the low frequency of digital interactions that take place among teacher leaders and their colleagues.

- I would say that's probably fewer, so probably once a week.
- I would say that as far as my teacher-leader role, we don't do a lot by e-mail. I would say it's mostly conversations, which I kind of prefer.
- I would say it's through email, monthly.
- I don't e-mail that much about assessment kind of things. That doesn't really come up, because we have the weekly meeting. And so, I think there's a place to ask things and talk about things. So, I think it would be really rare to get an e-mail.

Subtheme 4.4: Empathy
This subtheme reveals how teacher leaders often empathize with their colleagues. Throughout the interviews, there were 22 references to this subtheme. The data will be presented in the following 3 data sets:

- Gaining Perspective for Effective Leadership
- Compassion for Teachers
- I’m in Your Shoes Too

Significant Direct Quotations from Interview Data Supporting Subtheme 4.4

Gaining Perspective for Effective Leadership
The following data set shows how teacher leaders use empathy to gain unique insights into the perspectives of their colleagues; which enables them to effectively lead from that new perspective.

- I think being a teacher in meetings with the different teacher leaders has helped me get perspective of what the other teachers are going through when I'm leading a meeting, or whatever. And so, it helps me see it from a teacher's perspective, me being led by another teacher leader, and then just seeing what works, what might not work so well in their meetings and then I can kind of go from that.
- To make sure that you're prepared and that you have thought through what's gonna be most beneficial; what's the most beneficial use of time. Like, how is what we're gonna do gonna benefit the students; but also as teachers, how's it gonna benefit us. So, empathy, value their time in the meetings, and then door prizes are always helpful at meetings.
- So, to just always see yourself through the eyes of the teacher, so that way you realize sometimes you might have a side conversation with somebody that you're sitting next to, that kind of thing.
- You want to feel like you're using people's time wisely; because you know your time hasn't always been used wisely based on other meetings that you've been in.
- Because there's something behind that. It's probably not just that they're being lazy, and if it is, then maybe it's too much work. Maybe it's that we're overwhelming them and they physically can't do that much. Try to figure out what's going on.
- I think in moments of pressure. Teaching is a demanding job, so I think when they're feeling the crunch. I think that can instigate a moment when they need to reach out or I can sense that someone needs to be reached out to.
- So, because we're teachers and leaders, I think that we have a lot of empathy for what teachers have to do. And so that, I think, is really a big thing, because I think we have to understand the burden of grading, and then a bag full of student writing, that could take hours to grade. And all the things that we need to do. And also, being able to… the interactions that teachers have to have with parents, and to feel prepared and ready.
- They wear their emotions on their sleeves, and so I know what they are feeling all the time.

Compassion for Teachers
The following data set provides examples of how empathy touches the hearts of teacher leaders to have compassion for their colleagues.

- I know as a teacher that time is precious and we always have other things we want to be doing, or we think we need to be doing and so when there's another meeting, it's difficult to keep the perspective of, "It's good to grow professionally, but I have a million papers I need to grade or things I need to do as a teacher."
- And so just to remind them, "Don't worry, we're not standing the whole time and here's the door prizes and there really is a reason for doing this."
- We've all been there when we're ... When I was a teacher and when you were a teacher, we can recall having that feeling like, "Ah, I got PD." You know sometimes it's like, "Ah it's a drag because I know I got to do this, I got to do this and I know if I just had this time, I could get this done before tomorrow." There's always more to do. And so sometimes to take that mindset and put everything on pause and shift gears into being a learner or a part of the learning community.
• And with you trying to put yourself in the place of the teacher or the students. Compassion. Just doing it from a place of just wanting to help and support and then just being.

• “I know you're really tired.” I like to say on Wednesdays, “you probably don't want to be doing rubrics right now but ...” To bring it more down on their level.

• I think you always have to figure out people's motivation, or kind of figure out where they're coming from. So, there's one teacher, who I think that she has a lot of stress at home, and so when I talk to her, I try to think about what's going on and what's causing that. Not causing, I don't need to know all the personal things behind it, but she might feel more stressed about something that we have to do for school, because it feels bigger than it needs to, because she has other things that she has to deal with.

I’m in Your Shoes Too
The following data how participants often empathize with their colleagues by sharing the message that “I'm in your shoes too.”

• So at the beginning I made sure that I reminded them, I was in their shoes, that I've had to adopt new curriculums that I wasn't a big fan of and I brought up some literacy examples; and so I reminded them that now we all see that the literacy change was a good one, even though most of us were not that excited about it in the beginning, and so with your ... I just reminded them that it was new for all of us too and it's been a learning curve for us; but since we've been through that, then we can help them. I think just kind of the way I began the meeting and reminded them that I'm in their shoes, I'm the same as them.

• And to put yourself in their shoes and remind them that you're in their shoes, so that they realize that I'm also having to teach and do the same things that they're having to do, it's not someone who's out of the classroom saying, "Do all of this," while I don't have students all day.

• To remind them, "I'm in your shoes. I also have students. I also have exit tickets to grade. I have all these same things to do.”

• So, I think in general the empathy that teacher leaders have as teachers, and that no one's trying to throw a bunch of stuff on my plate, because they understand how we're all kind of working together.