

DISSERTATION

THE NATURE OF THE LITERACY COACHING EXPERIENCE: EXPLORING
TEACHER-COACH RELATIONSHIPS IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

THE NATURE OF THE LITERACY COACHING EXPERIENCE: EXPLORING TEACHER-COACH RELATIONSHIPS IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

While much research indicates that instructional coaching is likely to be a critical component in the implementation of school reform efforts, little research has explored the actual coaching relationship. Using a phenomenological inquiry approach, the language of the personal perceptions of coaching relationships as revealed through in-depth interviews as well as the interactions between literacy coaches and teachers during coaching sessions were analyzed in order to better understand the nature of coaching relationships and the perceptions that coaches and teachers have concerning coaching's impact on student achievement.

Phenomenological analysis using Moustakas' (1994) outline of the van Kaam method, was conducted on nine in-depth interviews with coaches and teachers, and six themes were identified and explored. Role analysis (Carspecken, 1996) using an overlay of Killion & Harrison's (2006) roles of coaches and Anderson et al.'s (2001) Revised Bloom's Taxonomy was conducted on the transcripts of six coaching sessions. The metaphors that coaches and teachers use to describe coaching and coaching relationships were also explored. A pilot study was conducted which included three in-depth

interviews and video transcripts of two coaching sessions. The pilot data set was used to refine the data collection and analysis procedures that were initially outlined.

The understandings gained through an exploration of the descriptions and interactions of coaches and teachers holds the potential to provide a common language to support role clarification for coaches, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders. Educators and instructional leaders need the language that would empower them to effectively describe the coaching relationship in order to be able to articulate the rationale needed to provide coaching as a potentially powerful professional development context in the current era of accountability. Additionally, a rich description of the coaching relationship that facilitates role clarification, as well as a clearer understanding of the extent to which the work is grounded in student achievement data, serves to aid in the development of guidelines for coaching programs. Suggestions for future research are outlined based on the findings.

DEDICATION

Writing my dissertation has been a joy-filled labor of passion and commitment. I dedicate it to my large, eclectic, and endearing family, those named here and those not. Thank you all for understanding the times when I could not be there and for trusting that my heart was always with you.

To my parents, Martin and Ida, thank you for being my first and best teachers, for the encouragement to continue my education and for the countless times you extended your loving, helping hands along the way to make it possible.

To my husband, Scott, thank you for serving as my ever present guide through my very own Hero's Journey. With you by my side, I have slain the dragon! Here's to the many calls we have yet to answer together.

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Lastly, I express my heartfelt gratitude to the God of my salvation who has granted such a wealth of opportunities, the energy to embrace them, and the people in my life who make each step of the journey a delight. May my work, my life, my every breath always reflect His glory and His grace.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In recent years the number of schools that employ literacy coaches has drastically increased (Richard, 2004). In an interview with *Northwest Education* former National Reading Panel member, Michael Kamil (2006) explicitly states, “we have absolutely no single piece of evidence that coaching is effective...There is literally nothing out there that would justify the kind of money we’re spending in states like Florida, where they’re putting a coach in every school” (p. 16). Even so, the panel on which Kamil served recommended coaching as part of effective professional development design and funds to provide coaching are part of the Reading First grant (US Department of Education, 2001). Since that time, numerous school reform projects¹ include literacy coaches as part of the design, yet there is still surprisingly little research focused on the interactions of coaches and teachers (Nowak, 2003) or studies conducted from the perspective of teachers who have been coached (Robinson, Egawa, Buly, & Coskie, 2005). Coaching interactions provide the observable evidence of teacher-coach relationships, and exploring the perceptions of those who coach and are coached would honor the voices of those most directly affected by coaching.

Coaching is not unique to education, yet even within the specific realm of literacy coaching there are multiple models for coaching, and there is little agreement on the role

¹ Examples include Literacy Collaborative® and America’s Choice Schools.

of the literacy coach (Buly, Coskie, Robinson, & Egawa, 2004, 2006; Richard, 2004; Scallan, 1987; Toll, 2007). There is also a lack of consistency in the credentials required in order to be hired as a literacy coach (Allington, 2006). I am interested in taking a closer look at the dialogue that is actually occurring in coaching sessions and exploring the perceptions of the coaching relationship of those involved in order to gain an understanding of the meaning that participants make of the coaching experience: the nature of literacy coach-elementary teacher relationships. I am also interested in exploring teacher and coach perceptions of the impact that coaching has on student achievement.

Background of the Researcher

In an effort to make the “I” in this research transparent, it is important to share my professional background and the impact that it has on the study at hand (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). I present a cursory view here to provide an overview of the impetus for the study and a full treatment to explore the implications for potential bias in the beginning of Chapter 4. My interest in this topic is a natural outgrowth of my work, as I occupy one of those recently created coaching positions in a rural community in the southeastern United States. I was trained as an intermediate Literacy Collaborative® coordinator at Georgia State University. I completed my yearlong training in the summer of 2003, and I have been providing coaching in one-on-one and group contexts at the elementary school in which I teach since that time. I taught onsite literacy courses for third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers through the 2008-2009 school year.

In 2006, I became the lead intermediate literacy coach for the system. This shift toward a county-wide perspective along with all that I was learning in doctoral studies caused my interest to broaden beyond my own experiences and the experiences of those with whom I worked in the same district. Additionally, as part of my role as literacy coach, I hosted visitors who were interested in observing the literacy framework in action in our school. Coaches in other systems often arranged these visits and accompanied teachers, and I began to have dialogue with colleagues whose coaching roles were not identical to mine. I began to desire a more global understanding of literacy coaching.

As a primary teacher, I was coached before I became a coach, so I had a very clear, albeit limited, schema concerning coaching. The literacy coordinator (the term used to designate the literacy coach in the system in which I worked) spent the entire language arts block in my classroom daily. Early on she typically taught the lessons, and then we began to share the teaching role. Sometimes I would teach, and she would provide feedback. Sometimes we taught together. Always we talked about rationale and next steps.

To me a coach was a colleague who was more knowledgeable in a specific area, in this case the literacy framework, and helped me think deeply about the purposes behind the instructional decisions I was making. A coach was someone with whom I could discuss the evidence of learning that I was noticing in students' work, someone who would help me focus on what the next steps might be, based on that evidence. This relationship that was so rich with collegial conversations transformed my practice and expanded my thinking. When the opportunity to become a literacy coordinator in the intermediate grades presented itself, I expressed my interest immediately. I felt that if I

could provide the kind of support for even one colleague that had been provided for me through coaching, I had no choice but to do so.

During my training year, I did not have coaching duties, and the thought of them, even given my positive experiences, was rather daunting. I knew that teachers with whom I would be working would have differing levels of commitment toward implementing the framework. I knew that I was bound to encounter resistance, but I was convinced that as we entered the process, the student and adult learning would serve as positive reinforcement. With new understandings and student successes, our work would gain momentum. The reality of system-wide implementation was a given, and I wanted to be there to help with the process.

In retrospect, my first year of coaching was somewhat mechanical; we all went through the motions of coaching as defined by the standards, meeting twice a month to work together in one component of the literacy framework. As I built relationships with teachers with whom I had not worked previously, I noticed that some coaching relationships were easy to build, and some were more challenging. I have made the comment to teachers with whom I work that I wish I had known the words to use when we started this process; I wish in hindsight that I had possessed a clear-enough picture of my role that I could have articulated it well. I was building relationships toward the vision of what coaching represented for me, and I did not realize at the time how the ghosts of the visions that others held were affecting the process. I believe that the ability to articulate the coaching relationship and its purpose would have greatly facilitated the relationship building process, perhaps relieving some of the early fears my colleagues experienced that I only discovered later, long after trust had been established.

As I began to delve into the current literature, my image of literacy coaching grew increasingly cloudy rather than clear. First, it was difficult to find research on this topic. Even in January of 2008 a *MetaLib*² search for literacy coach in the domain of education only resulted in 82 hits for articles and books. The recent realization of the need for additional research is evident in that 13 of the returned hits were published in 2007, 14% of the published literature in the previous year alone. The same search in *Digital Dissertations and Theses* resulted in 30 hits, all of which had been published between 2002 and 2007. The rise in publishing and research interest in coaching is a contemporary development, even though some forms of coaching have been used in schools for more than 35 years (Robinson, Egawa, Buly, & Coskie, 2005). I found I had to broaden my inquiry to include any coaching in education that was not sports related, and these coaches are commonly referred to as instructional or academic coaches, terms that are sometimes used synonymously and sometimes include literacy coaching as a component. Additionally, I began to consider coaching in the business realm, namely executive coaching. I provide a few examples of literature borrowed from this form of coaching, as the perspective of the recipient of the coaching has been considered in the executive coaching context, adding a viewpoint that is not currently available in the literacy coaching literature.

As I continued to explore coaching more deeply, I wondered why the metaphor of coaching was selected to describe this type of collegial interaction. In the beginning of my own coaching, this metaphor made perfect sense to me, and so I did not question it. I

² *MetaLib* searches Education Abstracts (EBSCO), Eric (OCLC), Sociological Abstracts (CSA), and PsychINFO (EBSCO) databases simultaneously when searching in the education domain.

had been sent away to receive training; therefore I had served as a lead learner and returned to share my learning in a way that ensured I would have time to work alongside colleagues as they took on the new learning, much as a baseball coach would work with players on their swing. The purpose was to help the teacher/player improve.

However, later in my experience, coaching began to take on a more cognitive component. Once routines and procedures were in place, my expertise in the given area shared, the discussions centered more on intricacies of the literacy framework and dilemmas of teaching and learning. To return to the baseball coach metaphor, this phase was more like the baseball coach helping a player think through a decision he/she might have to make in the game; it was far more process oriented, and there was no “right” answer. It was less about the nuts and bolts of stance and swing, and more about the pros and cons of delivery methods, how to decide between a knuckle-ball versus a fast ball.

This metaphor of peer-coach as athletic coach is well developed by Showers (1984) in a report entitled *Peer Coaching: A Strategy for Facilitating Transfer of Training* that was created for the Center for Educational Policy and Management at Oregon University. In Appendix A of this report, “The Coaching of Teaching: Training Manual for Peer Coaches,” Showers outlines an interview with University of Oregon’s football coach Rich Brooks and explores the similarities in athletic coaching and peer-coaching. The metaphor is rich with vivid comparisons. Showers quotes Brooks’ address to his freshmen players, referring to knowledge of strategic moves that Brooks proposes will exist in the players’ minds long before their bodies are able to perform these functions. Showers connects this to knowledge of new pedagogical techniques that, while teachers may have heard about and even seen, they cannot yet perform, as such

techniques have not yet been practiced. In other words, it will take time and repeated attempts to move this new knowledge from the cognitive to the physical realm.

Additionally, teaching requires the ability to adapt strategies to meet the varying needs of learners, so beyond practicing to take on the technique, there is additional work in knowing the technique well enough to alter it to better meet the needs of students, while remaining true to its nature and purpose. Showers (1984) points out that Coach Brooks' response to interview questions illustrates this connection to sports as well. Players can often execute a particular drill in isolation; however, in order to determine whether or not a player has mastered the maneuver, a coach must observe the player in authentic action; it is all about the game. After analyzing the data of practice and game performance, a coach knows which skills a player needs to revisit and strengthen. Because of this emphasis on learning by doing and learning with the support of someone who has greater knowledge, coaching holds to the tenets of constructivist learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978). The player/teacher is the learner and the coach/literacy coach attempts to keep the player/teacher working in his/her *zone of proximal development* by observing what he/she knows and is able to do independently (Vygotsky).

Within this metaphor there are also some connotations that began to create difficulties for me, difficulties which in part, led to the formation of the research questions I selected. For example, a football coach is often a former player who was accomplished. This lends credibility to the coach's ability to support the player, yet it also contributes to a sense of hierarchy in the relationship. Secondly, many coaches enforce a "my way or the highway" approach to their team management. This raises issues of power, and such an approach would not be in keeping with the spirit of literacy or

instructional coaching as grounded in collegial relationships in the preponderance of the literature (Vacilotto & Cummings, 2007; Toll, 2007). Finally, the image of coaches yelling on the sidelines and having the power to dismiss players from the team is also incongruent with the bulk of the literature, which tends to emphasize the importance of coaching roles not including supervisory or evaluative components (Toll, 2007; Joyce & Showers, 2002).

In retrospect, I now believe that I wrestled with these issues during my first years of coaching. I did not have a name for the issues, only a sense that I was battling ghosts of power and perception, whether those ghosts were created by prior supervisory experiences or by the connotations associated with the terminology I was using to outline this new relationship, I do not know, but I felt the presence of them on numerous occasions and in multiple contexts. Sifting through these issues as I was learning more about coaching and leadership further fueled my interest in a deeper understanding of coaching.

In spite of the fact that the term literacy coaching is applied to varying models (Buly, et al., 2004; Coskie, Robinson, Buly, & Egawa, 2005; Garmston, 1987), numerous studies and resources now support the use of some form of coaching in professional development for teachers (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Nowak, 2003; Rodgers & Pinnell, 2002; Toll, 2007). A person who serves in this capacity may be called a reading coach³, an academic coach, an instructional coach, a lead instructional teacher,

³ As a note of clarification, the term reading coach can also be applied to an individual who works directly with students to “support children’s literacy learning without focusing on direct instruction of reading” (Wasik, 1999, p. 654). This is not the type of reading coach to which I am referring.

or a literacy coach. Although coaching in any of the various models is grounded in social interaction, to date, the interactions between coaches and teachers have rarely been the focal point of research (Nowak). Allington, Johnston, and Day (2002) point out that the quality of classroom dialogue is critical to student success, but it is not monitored. The same is true for professional dialogue among adult learners. Kinnucan-Welsch, Rosemary, and Grogan (2006) assert that, “It is in these coaching conversations that we can begin to better understand the complex role of the literacy coach...” (p. 433). The language used in literacy coach-teacher conversations deserves focused analysis for “language is the central medium through which meaning is constructed and conveyed” (Schram, 2003, p. 71). It is this meaning or nature of the teacher-coach relationship that I seek to understand.

Statement of the Research Problem

The lack of understanding concerning the role of the literacy coach and the nature of coaching creates barriers for school leaders as they seek to make wise use of resources to support change (Poglinco & Bach, 2004). The categories outlined in the literature typically describe who is coaching and being coached. Such descriptions might offer some insight into the purpose of coaching according to the given model, but they do not begin to address the nature of coaching in practice. The lack of understanding concerning the nature of coaching creates problems for leaders as they seek to defend the cost of coaching when stakeholders question the need, frustrates collaborative efforts as coaches seek to work with administrators and teachers, and complicates the need to monitor the effectiveness of coaching.

The ultimate goal of coaching, indeed of any professional development for teachers, is increased student achievement (Guskey, 2003). Several studies have sought to link coaching with the desired outcomes of student achievement or teacher change in attitudes and/or practice (Foster, 2010; Gibson, 2002; Rasmussen, 2005; Sellers, 2006; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2005; Teemant, Wink, & Tyra, 2011). Poglinco and Bach (2004) point out a lack of focus on performance standards in coaching models and recommend creating direct links to increase the impact on student achievement. Bean (2004) and Rasmussen (2005) indicate that additional research is needed concerning the effects of coaching on student achievement. The first step in such research is to explore whether or not coaches and teachers perceive a connection between coaching and student achievement, whether or not student achievement is a focus or component of the relationship, and whether or not they can name the data that supports this perception, engaging in what reform leader Sarason (1996) describes as the “self-analysis focused on student gains” that is required for change to occur in within the school culture (p. 353).

Furthermore, to improve these outcomes and maintain the focus on professional development and improved student achievement some studies indicate the need for coaches to receive role clarification (Gibson, 2002; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). In fact, Taylor, Moxley, Chanter, and Boulware (2007) recommend that an administrator’s first step for “leveraging the literacy coach’s position” is to clearly define the roles and responsibilities for the coach and for those colleagues who will be involved in the professional development the coach provides (p. 24). The proposed study would offer new insights into and rich descriptions of the role of literacy coaches and the nature of

their relationships with teachers in an effort to take the first steps toward meeting those needs.

The current political climate is highly focused on standardized and quantitative measures of performance, even though a variety of data types provide a more complete picture (Bernhardt, 2000). In this climate of quantitative data and accountability measures, administrators can be called into question concerning the cost associated with providing a literacy coach. Administrators can cite the work of Joyce and Showers (2002) that offers a guiding estimate that the percentage of staff development participants engage in transfer, the continued application of newly acquired skills or strategies, increases by 90% with coaching⁴ as an additional component of the training provided. Yet, as Joyce and Showers go on to point out, “The failure to monitor implementation of curriculums, instructional strategies, and other innovations has cost school improvement efforts dearly in the past, resulting in both inability to interpret student learning outcomes and spurious conclusions regarding the impact of change programs” (p. 95).

An innovation, such as coaching, that is not clearly defined and aligned with goals, cannot be monitored for effectiveness. A description of coaching that arises from the way it is enacted stands to offer the language that administrators need in order to articulate the role(s) of coaches and be advocates for supporting teachers and school improvement in this way as well as identify gaps between the goals of coaching and the perceptions and interactions that shape the coaching experience. Teachers and coaches would also be empowered with the language that captures the essence of the experience

⁴ Joyce and Showers (2002) explain that, whether a peer or a trainer provides the coaching, this rough estimate based on numerous empirical studies provides a guide to match desired outcomes with appropriate components of training (p. 78).

to be their own advocates and to bring to the meta-cognitive level awareness and clarification of the role(s) that coaching plays. Furthermore, clearly articulated descriptions of the nature of the coaching relationship would facilitate the development and implementation of monitoring practices that aid in evaluation of effectiveness and drive efforts toward continued improvement.

Research Questions

The following inquiry domains focus on developing an understanding of the phenomenon of literacy coaching as experienced by those who coach and are coached. They are divided into empirical questions that guide the inquiry and theoretical directions that explicitly connect the questions to the underlying rationale.

Inquiry Domain One: The Essence of the Coaching Relationship

Empirical Question:

What is the nature of literacy coach-teacher relationships?

Theoretical Direction:

From a phenomenological perspective, coaching relationships have an essence, and that essence can only be determined by analyzing the interactions and perceptions of those who experience the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Inquiry Domain Two: Coaching Interactions

Empirical Question:

What language patterns emerge during literacy coaching interactions, and what do those patterns indicate about the nature of coaching relationships? To what extent does the language include references to increased student achievement and data?

Theoretical Direction:

Meaning is socially constructed as actors play out their roles. The dialogic process offers insight into the role sets, and thus it provides one window into the essence of the coaching relationship (Carspecken, 1996).

Inquiry Domain Three: Self-Reported Perceptions of Coaches and Teachers

Empirical Questions:

What language do teachers and coaches use to describe their perceptions of coaching?

What metaphors might be used and what might these metaphors reveal about the nature of literacy coach-teacher relationships?

Theoretical Direction:

The metaphors that we use offer insight into the way we think, thus offering a different window into the essence of the coaching relationship (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

These questions are grounded in an interpretivist/ phenomenological perspective, which holds that the essence of coaching can only be distilled from the perceptions and interactions of those who experience it (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000; Patton, 2002;

Schwandt, 2000). The language of these interactions forms the central focus because “words and categories are the constitutive building blocks of the social world” (Gubrium & Holstein, p. 489). The philosophical and linguistic work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) provides the rationale that metaphors are not merely a tool of language, rather they provide the structure of human thought. Thus, metaphors are not only a tool of data analysis and reduction (Miles & Huberman, 1994), but they are, according to Lakoff and Johnson, an integral part of the perceptions that I seek to understand.

Definition of Terms

Coaching Session – While there are numerous models of coaching, all involve dialogue between the designated coach and a classroom teacher. For the purpose of this study, the session is considered to be the time during which the coach and teacher have an opportunity to plan for and/or reflect on a lesson. If the coaching model of the school under study is more formal and includes what is often referred to as a pre and post conference, both of these will be considered part of one coaching session.

Literacy Coach – The International Reading Association (IRA, 2004) describes the role of the reading coach as one who works with classroom teachers, not as a supervisor or an evaluator, but as professional development provider who works with teachers in the schools where they teach. Consistent with this definition is a general description that Buly, Coskie, Robinson, and Egawa (2004) outlined to shape the focus of their coaching inquiry as editors for *Voices from the Middle*.⁵ Buly et al. (2004) define

⁵ *Voices From the Middle* is a peer-reviewed journal from the National Council for the Teachers of English.

the literacy coach's primary role as "to support teachers to become more reflective, to refine what they are doing, to set goals" in a "non-evaluative, respectful" capacity (p. 60). The reading or literacy coach often models/demonstrates lessons for teachers. The coach may also observe the teacher and offer feedback for the purpose of assisting the teacher in reflection and goal setting, as well as assist the teacher in data analysis and lesson planning based on results of the analysis. The coach works with the teacher to address the dilemmas that arise in trying to meet the needs of all students.

For the purpose of this study, elementary literacy coaches will be further defined as certified elementary school teachers who provide on-site professional development in one-on-one contexts with regular classroom teachers in literacy teaching. Inclusion in the study is dependent upon the fact that they serve in this capacity, but it is not dependent on the title they hold. Academic coaches, instructional coaches, or lead instructional teachers who serve in literacy contexts will be included and referred to as literacy coaches, even though for those so designated, literacy coaching may be only one facet of their role.

Delimitations

As stated previously, coaching is gaining popularity in multiple arenas. My professional training and role are both evidence of the rise in interest as well as the impetus for the experiences that have led me to desire deeper understandings of the relationships and how they might enhance teacher improvement and student achievement. Beyond my personal experiences and even beyond the field of education, one can now find life coaches or executive coaches who are often sought to provide objective support for decision-making processes. Auerbach (2006), an executive coach, describes himself

as a “thought partner” who helps clients engage in “cognitive process” (p. 103). In this way, the work of these coaches is similar to that of literacy coaches; however, I restricted the study to literacy coaches specifically for numerous reasons. First, executive coaches are typically sought out and hired by clients, while schools or systems typically provide literacy coaches, which creates a potentially significant difference in the context in which the relationship is situated. Thus, while coaching techniques may be similar, the relationship may be quite different. Furthermore, my interest is specifically in coaching in the educational field, and while there are other types of instructional coaches who work with teachers employed in the educational arena (math coaches for example), they are less common. Focusing the study on literacy coaches offers a larger population within the field of education from which to draw and grounds the exploration in my own background knowledge and experience.

Assumptions and Limitations

The focus of this qualitative inquiry is increased understanding of literacy coach-teacher relationships. As Shank (2002) indicates is often true in qualitative research, I am not seeking to simplify my understandings, but to deepen them, thus, generalizability is not the goal of this inquiry. I have addressed issues of authenticity and trustworthiness in the design in multiple ways (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Ultimately the quality of the study will depend upon my adherence to the use of “rigorous methods,” the credibility I establish as the researcher through this process, and an abiding “philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p. 584). In using the term rigorous, I mean that each of the steps that I outline must be purposeful with the full rationale provided,

followed consistently throughout the study, and focused on garnering as much of a contextual understanding as possible. Any additional analysis required would be held to the same high standards in clarity of purpose, consistency, and commitment to the integrity and importance of the context. I hold to the belief that qualitative inquiry for the sake of deeper understanding is a valuable endeavor in its own right.

I bring to this research a frame of understanding, a perspective that is uniquely my own constructed through my experiences and cultural boundaries. I am a white, southern, female teacher. This creates a lens through which I naturally filter information. I prefer certain styles of interaction, value particular characteristics such as honesty and disclosure, and interpret information through the cultural norms imparted throughout my development and through which I have constructed my own world-view. I am an academic coach who serves in the area of literacy. I was trained in a particular instructional design for balanced literacy and a coaching framework.

I seek to rise above the limitations of my current understandings, but the light of new experiences is filtered through the lenses of my preconceptions. While I am committed to taking every precaution to disclose my own assumptions and biases, they will to some extent enter the interpretive process, for as Patton (2002) proposes, “neutrality and impartiality are not easy stances to achieve” (p. 569). To minimize this potential limitation I kept a reflexive journal in which I recorded my reflections on the research process and the decisions that I made along the way, in order to assist my efforts to bracket my own thinking and document the data collection and data analysis decision-making process. Additionally, I completed the interview in writing as if I were “interviewing” myself. I was inspired by the self-interview between bell hooks (1994)

and Gloria Watkins in *Teaching to Transgress*, and I reasoned that this approach might give me “a way to share” that would assist my exploration disclosure of potential biases (hooks, 1994, p. 45). This endeavor supported the development of my perspective in Chapter 4, where I will share a segment of the reflexive story created through this exercise (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Furthermore, I brought with my perspective a physical presence into a social and cultural realm that were not my own. My acceptance into this realm and my ability to build rapport and trust, were critical, and they were not givens (Patton, 2002). The lack of either could also serve as a limitation. The opposite could have been a limitation as well. If I were privileged to have access and easy rapport because we are demographically similar, this could have lead to a tendency for participants to say what they believed I want to hear, to “help” the researcher. The inclusion of observations to accompany the interview data served as an additional data source to increase confirmability through triangulation and help minimize this potential limitation (Patton). Triangulation is the practice of pinpointing location by crosschecking from multiple angles, and in this study it was achieved by viewing the relationship through dialogic interactions, individual perceptions of those involved, and my own reflections as I attempt to co-construct the meaning as the researcher, exploring the implications of my potential biases (Patton).

Finally, I solicited participants for the study, and it is possible that people chose to participate because they have strong feelings associated with coaching. These feelings might be positive or negative, and it is conceivable that this skewed my findings. I trust that positive and negative associations are part of the complex coaching relationship, yet I must be cautious not to overstep the data as I draw conclusions and recognize the

limitations that working with only those who volunteer to participate brings to the design and ultimately, to the conclusions that I reached.

Significance of the Study

Little research has given voice to coaches or teachers concerning their work (Nowak, 2003). Additionally, while several studies have attempted to examine the links between coaching and student achievement, without a working conceptualization of the nature of the coaching relationship and whether or not coaches and teachers perceive increased student achievement as a focus and goal of coaching interactions, important foundational understandings are missing in such studies. This study sought to focus on deepening that understanding, namely, a conceptualization of the nature of coaching relationships, adding a piece to the puzzle at hand. Without this knowledge, studies that seek to make connections between classrooms with coaching and student achievement are inadequate, as the nature of the experience of coaching itself has not been clarified. This study certainly did not complete the clarification but took a step in that direction.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Coaching is touted as a professional development context, a way for teachers to learn in their own classrooms and with their own students, thus, in order to address the coaching literature in context, a brief exploration of relevant literature concerning learning transfer is also included. Learning transfer, or change in practice due to new learning (newly acquired insights and information), is a consistent goal of coaching. Therefore, an understanding of how learning transfer occurs helps to frame the analysis of coaching dialogue, making it possible to recognize potential evidence in the transcripts of language and interactions that support learning transfer within coaching. The background information provides the means to understand the rationale for what Toll (2007) describes as the “explosion of literacy coaching on the educational scene” in spite of the lack of empirical studies available (p. 1). Additionally, the background information makes it possible to frame a discussion of the similarities and differences in coaching models and frameworks.

Learning Transfer

As I consider professional development, I think about the term itself and how this phrase that I use so casually holds such deeper meaning. I am reminded of Vygotsky’s (1978) assertion that development follows learning, beginning rather than ending the

process. Development implies organic growth, slow processes with observable results. This causes me to consider the larger picture of learning transfer; for while the work of coaching lies in analysis, dialogue, and reflective thought, the goal of coaching involves changes in classroom practice. Many outside the educational arena have long been engaged in this work of large-scale reform, and we as a profession stand to gain from the larger view of organizational change. In the business management and human resource development arenas, the terminology is different. For example *reframing* is used rather than *reform*, yet the goals of restructuring and re-conceptualizing in order to improve performance are at the heart the same.

The terms *training*, *education*, and *development* are often confused and may be used synonymously; however, a close look at the use of the terms reveals differences in the connotations and philosophical underpinnings. Paauwe and Williams (2001) describe training as highly focused with specific outcomes, education as a broader term with outcomes that are still clearly defined, and development as something set apart...the destination more vague, yet progression and growth seem inherent in the term. This creates a continuum of training...education...development, beginning with the most specific goal-oriented term, moving toward the more open-ended term.

The goal of training then would be that individuals take on new routines and procedures, usually the routines and procedures that the organization for which they work requires of them. Education is something that happens outside of the work environment, something a learner goes away (to college for example) to get. The term management development is pervasive in business literature, as is professional development in the educational arena. When photographs are developed, chemicals are applied to cause the

picture to appear. In like manner, management or professional development is applied to bring out and refine the qualities of individuals that are conducive to their role. While the terms are not synonymous, *training*, *education*, or *management/professional development* can lead to learning and learning transfer. Since each of these conceptualizations holds the potential to lead to learning transfer and learning transfer holds the potential to lead to a change in practice, and in so doing to increase student achievement, learning transfer is a goal of coaching.

That having been said, learning transfer is not a simplistic conceptualization, and not all learning transfer is created equal. In fact, the differences in types of learning transfer are at the root of some of the differences in various coaching models. Yelon and Ford (1999) outline a model of transfer that is multidimensional, taking into account numerous models for transfer that address the differences in support that trainers should provide given the differences in outcomes or goals of the transfer. Yelon and Ford's model illustrates the types of variations that might need to occur depending on whether the tasks associated with a given role require supervision and involve open or closed skills. Joyce, Calhoun, and Hopkins (1999) outline a similar continuum but use the term *horizontal transfer* rather than *near transfer* and *vertical transfer* rather than *far transfer*. There are differences in nuances of the definitions and models to be certain; however, the general agreement is that some transfer is more direct, simplistic, and similar to the original learning while some transfer is more complex, multidimensional, and sophisticated.

Now for a closer look at the two general conceptualizations along the learning transfer continuum. *Near* or *horizontal* transfer is an almost direct application of learning.

The learner is shown how to follow the steps of a routine task. Let us assume the task does not require any significant variation, such as making a cake according to a recipe. Such a task is referred to as a *closed skill*. Near transfer of closed skills could be described as somewhat robotic. On the other end of the continuum, *far or vertical transfer* involves the adaptation of new learning to fit a variety of novel circumstances. The multidimensional model outlined by Yelon and Ford (1999) is well grounded in the learning transfer literature and provides a useful frame onto which the professional development discussion can be mapped.

These conceptualizations of learning transfer as multidimensional (Yelon and Ford, 1999) take into account the nature of the goals and offer a framework for understanding the controversial goals of coaching, thus they provide two helpful frames. First, they offer a way to understand some of the controversy that arises in the coaching literature concerning teacher change. It is evident, based on the type of support that is outlined whether an author/researcher considers quality teaching to be the mastery of a discreet set of skills (closed skills) or closer to the status of an art, responsive to the differing contexts and needs of individuals and groups of learners (open skills). Supervision versus autonomy and closed versus open skills provide continuums along which coaching interactions can better understood and interpreted.

The assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning provide a lens through which the coachee might interpret coaching. On the one hand, coaching could be perceived, borrowing Freire's (2000) terminology, as an *anti-dialogic* act that inhibits the freedom of the coached individual through supervision and also views teaching acts as closed skills that are to be imitated and mastered. On the other hand, coaching might be

perceived as what Freire would describe as a *dialogic* process, in that it is a liberating act that facilitates the development of open skills and validates a teacher's autonomy to transfer learning in response to highly varying contexts. I will address these differences again in the discussion of coaching models, but first I will focus on the environmental factors that support learning transfer, as the coach is often depicted as contributing to these factors and/or facilitating the development of them within the school setting.

Supporting Learning Transfer

Several factors facilitate or inhibit learning transfer. Learning transfer is supported when the development of the individual as a critical thinker, reflective practitioner, and lifelong learner is the focus (Cope, 2003; Lowenstein, Thompson, & Gentner, 2003), and the learner's intrinsic motivation is tapped (Anis, Armstrong, & Zhu, 2004; Kinman & Kinman 2001; Kontoghiorghes, 2002). However, in order for a personal development focus to be effective as a foundation for transfer in the workplace, the goals of the organization in providing the opportunities and resources toward that end must be clearly defined, communicated, and supported by the workplace organization and environment (Romme & van Witteloostuijn, 1999; Yamnill & McLean, 2001). Otherwise the development of the individual may not necessarily lead to enhanced performance in the workplace. Furthermore, the emotional impact of the learning transfer process and workplace must be addressed, as negative emotions create barriers to performance, learning, and change (Seo, 2003; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). Those who would support and facilitate learning transfer must recognize the complexity of these

factors. The on-site coach in the educational arena is uniquely positioned to support the factors that facilitate learning transfer.

The factors that support or inhibit learning transfer in the corporate world are also viable in the educational arena. The terminology has a slightly different slant, however. When referring to professional development for teachers, the term is used broadly rather than as a specific reference to development as opposed to training. Often in educational literature, the term professional development is used to describe activities that in the corporate world would be described as training because the goal is to transmit technical information to implement a specific strategy or program. This issue of training, education, or development lies at the heart of one of the controversial aspects of coaching, as it creates ambiguity concerning the ownership of the desired change. True to the principles of adult learning theory, peer coaching holds that teachers must select their own goals in order to be committed to them. Hargreaves and Dawe (1990) points out that it is possible for coaching to be implemented in order to appear non-threatening yet still be a mandate in disguise.

As reform leader, Michael Fullan (2001) indicates, for the most part, professional development opportunities for teachers in the past have not been effective, and they have not been structured in ways that support learning transfer. The traditional workshop did not effectively impact classroom practice. Joyce and Shower's (2002) summary of the research illustrates the relative ineffectiveness of traditional staff development leading to a change in classroom practice, or transfer, and the potential for peer coaching to increase the effectiveness of staff development through increased transfer. As types of staff development interactions, Joyce and Showers identify the components of *study of theory*,

demonstrations, and *practice sessions* and outline the degree to which they affect the percentage of participants who achieve transfer (p. 78). When provided together these three components of staff development lead to transfer in approximately 5% of participants; when peer coaching is added to the combination of activities, the rate of transfer rises to approximately 95% of participants.

Numerous studies indicate that informal learning, learning that is situated in the reality of the workplace context and is needs focused, is a powerful and highly social structure for supporting learning transfer (Cromwell & Kolb, 2004; Cross, Baker, & Parker, 2003; Enos, Kehrhanh & Bell, 2003; Facticeau, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd, & Kudish, 1995; Kim, 2004). The social nature of informal learning is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory, as well as Hager's (2004) constructionist view of workplace learning as a process.

Professional learning communities are an extension of this line of thinking, providing opportunities for on-site, ongoing professional development and establishing a social context to support learners within what Vygotsky (1978) referred to as the *zone of proximal development* (Fullan, 2001; Chalmers & Keown, 2006). Through shared visions, clear goals, and common language, professional learning communities seek improvement and growth collaboratively, engaging in observation, reflection, and action. Professional learning communities hold a great deal of potential for school improvement, but they alone are not sufficient to sustain change (Fullan, 2005). Sustainable change requires what Fullan (2001) calls reculturing or recreating the teaching profession. Reculturing the profession would involve change in individual teachers, in classrooms, in schools, in systems, and so forth. The idea of reculturing is consistent with a

conceptualization of a school as a professional learning community engaged in triple loop learning (Romme & van Witteloostuijn, 1999).

Author and educator Donald Graves (2001) declares that teachers can derive energy for their work by “living, giving, and practicing in communities of mutual dependence and vision” (p. 10). Lumpe (2007) describes meaningful collaboration as the core of professional learning communities. Numerous sources indicate that teachers have not traditionally been part of such communities, but were instead isolated in their practice (Leonard & Leonard, 2001). In a professional learning community, teachers have the opportunity to work together toward the common goal of improving student learning. According to Lieberman and Miller (2006) a professional learning community serves to “reverse the isolation of teachers and offer a place for teachers to work together and connect with each other about their own work and the work of their students” (p. 105). This is a community about the business of “Doing better things” (Fullan, 2006, p. 14). Lumpe describes the common threads, regardless of the particular professional learning community (PLC) model or protocols used, as “reflective inquiry, social norm setting among professionals, using student assessments to target learning gaps, and modifying instruction to address the identified gaps” (p. 126). Thus, the work in which teachers engage in a PLC is grounded in student data and teachers are researchers and learners (Joyce & Showers, 2002). This is a group that engages in triple loop learning, adopting a set of processes by which they work together to achieve a shared vision, and adapting those processes in the interest of increasing effectiveness (Romme & van Witteloostuijn, 1999).

In order to continue to develop and live up to the vision of a professional learning community as dynamic, responsive, and networked, the PLC must strive to engage in triple loop learning. Romme and van Witteloostuijn (1999) describe single loop learning as involving minor innovations in the application of new knowledge, while double loop learning involves a paradigm shift, a change in the way a situation is viewed and approached. Professional learning communities certainly engage in these two types of learning, but in order to be sustainable, they must take another step towards what Fullan (2005) describes as “deep learning” (p. 22). Deep learning according to Fullan involves learning from what does not work, being responsive to the data, being innovative.

Furthermore, with triple loop learning, the learning extends beyond the individual, beyond the group, and leads to change at the systems level; for as Schlechty (1997) states, “Those who would change school systems must think systemically” (p. 185). When triple loop learning takes place, learners alter the ways in which they interact, creating the structures and routines to support their work in order to facilitate continuous cycles of double loop learning (Romme & van Witteloostuijn, 1999). Thus, the effective professional learning community takes on an almost organic nature, growing and changing, adapting its structures and systems to meet evolving needs. It is through each individual’s endeavor to continue learning and networking with others engaged in the same endeavor, that a professional learning community grows.

Coaches support individual learners and the addition of a coach is a change in the organizational structure of a school, creating a system of interaction that is positioned to support the development of a professional learning community. A systemic change such as this would fit Sarason’s (1996) description of a *Type A* change, a change that would

enable *Type B* changes to be made and sustained (p. 349). Sarason proposes that in order to change, teachers must engage in self-analysis with a critical eye on the expected outcome of gains in academic achievement. Much of this work is centered on asking the right questions, the questions that are grounded at the intersection of what teachers can do to influence the alignment of desired outcomes and current outcomes. A coach supports this process of self-analysis and provides outside feedback, offering the benefit of “clear eyes and less emotional attachment” (Sarason, p. 353). In this way, a coach could be considered a *Type A* change that leads to *Type B* changes, which, in the course of the development of a professional learning community that engages in triple loop learning, leads to more *Type A* changes, creating a cycle for renewal and growth within individuals and the school.

Coaching Models and Frameworks

Trying to organize the ideas of coaching that are presented in myriad ways throughout the literature, as one literacy coach so aptly stated, “is like trying to cut water with a knife” (Burkins, 2007, p. xv). The first distinction I shall attempt to impose for the purpose of structuring a conversation centered on these nebulous concepts is in my use of the term coaching model. A model could be considered a format for coaching interactions to follow, or it could be considered a conceptualization of the goals and outcomes of coaching, whatever the given format of interactions may be. I choose to refer to the formats or structures of coaching processes as *frameworks*, and I will refer to the conceptualizations as *coaching models* to avoid confusion. In any given framework for coaching interactions, there may be several models of coaching that come into play.

The second structural principle that I will establish at the beginning of this exploration of coaching frameworks and models is to note that the same themes that underlie the distinctions in the terms *training*, *education*, and *development* underlie many of the variations within coaching models. Toll (2007) enumerates twelve possible outcomes of literacy coaching that precede the desired outcome of increased student achievement. Much of the controversy associated with literacy coaching appears to arise from the desired outcomes of coaching that affect teachers and the philosophical and political implications inherent in them. Any given model supports multiple outcomes.

Even though many researchers use similar terms, the definitions are rarely the same, thus giving attention to the underlying purpose and desired outcomes will help organize the models in spite of the confusing terminology. Models can be sorted according to the type of interaction they propose and the goals to which they subscribe. Poglinco et al. (2003) and Scallan (1987) identify peer, mentor, and technical coaching models. Peer coaching is typically defined as two, possibly more, colleagues with similar experience collaborating to improve knowledge and skills (Poglinco et al., 2003). Scallan combines collegial and peer coaching, while Poglinco et al. (2003) make the distinction that collegial coaching focuses more on conversations and reflection. Garmston (1987) places cognitive coaching, “strategies designed to enhance teachers’ perceptions, thinking, and instructional decisions,” within this category (p. 20). Mentor coaching typically involves an experienced teacher as coach and a beginning teacher (Scallan, 1987; Poglinco et al., 2003). This type of coaching is more often explored in studies specific to beginning teachers, while studies that focus on coaching tend to focus on peer, technical, or collegial models or on those frameworks that are integral to a reform design

(for example, Literacy Collaborative®). Frameworks may combine several models. For example, a given framework may propose technical coaching, to implement the initiative, and then shift to a more collegial coaching model as implementation progresses.

While the coaching models focus on the relationships between coaches and teachers and the desired outcomes (technical implementation or reflection), frameworks focus on effectively structuring the interactions between coaches and teachers, providing a pattern to follow. Here, I will outline an exploration of two such frameworks. A closer look at the similarities and differences in these frameworks will help clarify conceptualizations of coaching possibilities. Lyons and Pinnell (2001) outline an analytical coaching framework for the coaching process. This framework is used in the Literacy Collaborative®, but like other components of the Literacy Collaborative balanced literacy approach (for example, Guided Reading⁶), the coaching framework may be used without adopting the full approach to literacy instruction. The framework that Lyons and Pinnell propose includes steps that the literacy coach takes before, during, and after an observation in a teacher's classroom. The second framework (Barkley & Bianco, 2005) also addresses the before, during, and after components. Both frameworks are grounded in the peer coaching structure, with the coach and teacher working together as colleagues.

Ackland (1991) divides peer coaching models according to whether the coach was an expert or the coaching was reciprocal. Lyons and Pinnell (2001) propose explicitly

⁶ Guided Reading according to the Fountas and Pinnell (2001) model involves a specific lesson structure and the use of leveled text selected for a small group of readers with similar needs. Each child reads the whole text independently. Guided Reading in the Four Blocks Method outlined by Cunningham (1999) involves predominantly shared reading initially with big books and multiple rereads in a variety of contexts.

that the coach must serve as a “more expert other” (p. 140), and this aligns with Ackland’s peer coaching by expert model. In contrast, the Barkley and Bianco (2005) framework encourages peer coaching training, the implication is to train groups of teachers to coach one another, causing this framework to fall into Ackland’s reciprocal category. Even given the difference, there is an emphasis in both frameworks that both parties, the individual who is coaching and the individual who is coached, are learners.

Another commonality in the two frameworks is the focus on relationship building, with the coach and teacher establishing trust, and clarifying that the role of the coach is not that of an evaluator or a supervisor. As Barkley and Bianco (2005) clearly state, “evaluators work for the system; coaches work for the coachee” (p. 161). Genuine open-ended questioning is touted as critical in both frameworks. Even though Lyons and Pinnell (2001) propose that the coach should have a wealth of knowledge, they are still careful to point out that the purpose of questioning is not to “play expert,” but “to see the lesson from the teacher’s perspective” (p. 117). The peer relationship and quest for learning are the central components.

The emphasis in the pre-conference or pre-observation stage of the frameworks proposed by Lyons and Pinnell (2001) and Barkley and Bianco (2005) are similar in many ways. First, they both describe conversations in which the coach is collecting data, information about the teacher’s beliefs, plans, and goals for students. Both frameworks emphasize listening closely and probing for deeper thinking as the coach seeks to help the teacher set the agenda for the observation. The content of the examples used in the two books is distinctively different. This is largely due to the fact that Lyons and Pinnell focus on literacy coaching in the elementary grades using a specific balanced literacy

framework, while Barkley and Bianco's focus includes high school and various content areas such as social studies. The similarities are striking, however, and speak to some of the more consistent themes in coaching literature.

The observation as described by Lyons and Pinnell (2001) and Barkley and Bianco (2005) involves the coach collecting data within the classroom environment using the pre-observation conversation to collect the data strategically. Additionally, the similarities in the post-observation conference between Lyons and Pinnell (2001) and Barkley and Bianco (2005) continue. This conference is, according to both frameworks, where the part of the process that really is coaching takes place. Here the coach helps the teacher reflect on the lesson, tying the reflection back to the agenda that the coach and teacher established in the pre-observation conference. Lyons and Pinnell and Barkley and Bianco emphasize that the coach should select one or two points from the multiple possibilities that hold the potential to help the teacher improve his/her teaching prior to the conference yet remain open to the salient points that the teacher brings to the conversation. Thus, the goal that emerges is truly collaborative, a negotiated agreement between two colleagues who share a common desire to improve instruction.

This combination of the coach's focus and willingness to be led by the needs of the teacher is consistent with Sellers (2006) assertion that effective coaching is a tangled paradox of structure and flexibility, offering opportunities to connect theory and research with day-to-day professional practice. Poglinco and Bach (2004) extol the benefits of coaching, but they warn just as emphatically that attention must be given to the complexities of coaching or the desired outcome of increased student achievement is not likely to be realized. Steckel's (2003) findings are congruent in that they emphasize the need for

coaching to be supported by a learning culture, organizational systems conducive to collaboration and coaching, and effective coaching processes in order to build capacity. Building capacity indicates that the learning is generative in nature, leading to far transfer. New understandings will not only be useful in the current context, but they will expand each teacher's ability to respond and adapt, thus increasing the entire learning community's ability to do so.

The key similarities between the frameworks proposed by Lyons and Pinnell (2001) and Barkley and Bianco (2005) are teacher reflection, collegial conversations grounded in the data, a positive atmosphere of mutual respect between the coach and teacher, specific feedback from the coach, and development of a clear and achievable goal. All of these similarities share the purpose of supporting better teaching to support student achievement. Reflection as a goal is consistent with Kinnucan-Welch, Rosemary, and Grogan's (2006) assertion that coaching has the potential to improve teachers' metacognitive practice. Barkley and Bianco evidence the cyclical nature of the process by describing how the post-observation conference feeds into, or perhaps even changes into, the pre-observation conference for the next session.

While the role of coach remains ill defined in the literature at large, the bulk of the current thinking tends to more widely embrace the effective literacy coach's role as non-evaluative (Toll, 2007; Coskie, Robinson, Buly, & Egawa, 2005; Barkley & Bianco, 2005; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). The potential for effective coaching is evident in the work of Lyons and Pinnell (2001) and Barkley and Bianco (2005), but the research indicates that not all coaching is effective. Poglinco et al. (2003) report that even when coaches are working under a single framework, in this case America's Choice, the role is still

ambiguous and plays out in different ways. In order for coaching to be effective, Sellers (2006) indicates that links between daily practice and research-based strategies must be made. Furthermore, Sellers (2006) proposes that real world problems of classroom application must be addressed and the strategies must be adaptable.

The frameworks outlined by Lyons and Pinnell (2001) and Barkley and Bianco (2005) demonstrate how the coaching relationships, shared experiences, reflective process, and goal selection carve out the time, space, and opportunity for teachers to be supported in making the links between theory and practice. In these ways, coaching has the potential to support professional development, learning transfer, the development of professional learning communities, and even Fullan's (2001) concept of reculturing at the school level. Because the coach is on-site to provide opportunity for collegial conversations and focuses those conversations on data, it is more likely that such interactions and data-driven decision making processes will become ingrained in the way a faculty works together. Changing the interactions alters the relationships, and Slater and Simmons (2001) describe the relationship change from colleague to peer coach as "radical" (p. 75). The new cultural expectation will shift to foster collegiality and collaboration rather than isolation. Sellers (2006) reports that upon reflection teachers who have engaged in coaching may view the coach as their "personal trainer or instructional guide" (p. 188); yet the relationship is simultaneously collegial in that each participant, the teacher and coach, can learn through coaching.

Coaching Advice

Lyons and Pinnell (2001) and Barkley and Bianco (2005) provide frameworks for coaching processes, but the vast majority of books available on the topic of literacy coaching have a different purpose, namely, to offer support and advice to those who find themselves serving in these often-ambiguous roles. A list of books specifically written for literacy coaches on the topic of literacy coaching compiled through Internet searches is provided in Table 2.1. There are, of course, other books not included here that address the broader subject of coaching in the field of education such as *Cognitive Coaching* by Costa and Garmston (2002) or of coaching in all content areas such as *Instructional Coaching* by Knight (2007). This was not an area of focus for my inquiry, but the list is offered here as evidence of the growing interest in coaching. Note that the titles evidence the type of literature that is prevalent, predominantly how-to guides, and the recent proliferation of the number of these types of books available in successive years.

Table 2.1 Books That Provide Advice and Tips Specific to Literacy Coaching (in Alphabetical Order by Year)

<p>2004 <i>The Reading Specialist: Leadership for Classroom, School, and Community</i> R. Bean</p> <p><i>The Literacy Coach's Handbook: A Guide to Research-Based Practice</i> S. Walpole & M. McKenna</p> <p><i>The Literacy Coach's Survival Guide: Essential Questions and Practical Answers</i> C. A. Toll</p>
<p>2005 <i>The Reading Coach: A How To Manual for Success</i> J. Hasbrouck & C. Denton</p>
<p>2006 <i>Becoming a Literacy Leader: Supporting Learning and Change</i> J. Allen, K. Szymusiak, & F. Sibberson</p>

2006, cont'd

Literacy Coaching: Developing Effective Teachers Through Instructional Dialogue
M. Duncan

Literacy Coaching: The Essentials
K. Casey

Literacy Coaching: A Handbook for School Leaders
D. E. Moxley & R. T. Taylor

The Literacy Coach's Desk Reference: Processes and Perspectives for Effective Coaching
C. A. Toll

Responsive Literacy Coaching: Tools for Creating and Sustaining Purposeful Change
C. Dozier

2007

Coaching for Balance: How to Meet the Challenges of Literacy Coaching
J. M. Burkins

Differentiated Literacy Coaching: Scaffolding for Student and Teacher Success
M. C. Moran

The Effective Literacy Coach: Using Inquiry to Support Teaching & Learning
A. Rodgers & E. M. Rodgers

Hands-On Literacy Coaching
N. N. Boyles

How to Coach Teachers Who Don't Think Like You: Using Literacy Strategies to Coach Across Content Areas
B. M. Davis

Lenses on Literacy Coaching: Conceptualizations, Functions, and Outcomes
C. A. Toll

The Literacy Coach: Guiding in the Right Direction
E. A. Puig & K. S. Froelich

Reading Specialists and Literacy Coaches in the Real World, 2nd Edition
M. E. Vogt & B. A. Shearer

2008

The Fundamentals of Literacy Coaching
A. Sandvold & M. Baxter

2008, cont'd

A Guide to Literacy Coaching: Helping Teachers Increase Student Achievement
A. B. Jay & M. W. Strong

The Literacy Coaching Challenge: Models and Methods for Grades K-8
M. C. McKenna & S. Walpole

Surviving But Not Yet Thriving: Essential Questions and Practical Answers for Experienced Literacy Coaches
C. A. Toll

2009

Effective Literacy Coaching: Building Expertise and a Culture of Literacy
S. Frost, R. Buhle, & C. Blachowicz

Literacy Coaching: Learning to Collaborate
B. J. Walker

The Literacy Coach's Game Plan: Making Teacher Collaboration, Student Learning, and School Improvement a Reality
M. Sadler & G. Nidus

Practical Literacy Coaching: A Collection of Tools to Support Your Work
J. M. Burkins

In summary, the body of literature is growing, but to date, still contains significant gaps, especially in the areas of the effects of coaching on student achievement and the nature of actual coaching interactions. What is known about effective professional development, learning transfer, professional learning communities, and school reform supports the idea of coaching, and because of this, as Bean (2004) states, “the concept of a literacy coach makes sense” (p. 59). Whether the coaching is described as technical, peer, peer expert, reciprocal, or collegial, there are common themes that continually arise in the literature and intersect with the themes of adult learning theory and school reform: trust, collegiality, community, support, learning, reflection, and feedback.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY
Research Design

Qualitative inquiry provides the vehicle to explore the complexities of the coaching interactions and to consider possible meanings that may be interpreted from the use of language (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Specifically, a phenomenological approach situates this inquiry in its context and recognizes that only those who coach and are coached are able to offer insights into the nature of the experience (Creswell, 1998). From an ontological perspective, I believe that the reality of coaching lies outside the perception of any single individual and can be identified only through an analysis of the interactions and perceptions of those who participate.

A phenomenological stance is consistent with this belief in that it holds that an essence of the phenomenon exists and can only be derived through the analysis of the interactions of those who have experienced it firsthand (Moustakas, 1994). “In phenomenology, perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge, the source that cannot be doubted” (Moustakas, p. 52). Thus, a phenomenological approach values the perceptions of participants, while, “The method of reflection that occurs throughout the phenomenological approach provides a logical, systematic, and coherent resource for carrying out the analysis and synthesis needed to arrive at essential descriptions of experience” (p. 47). Phenomenology provides a stance and a methodology that is well

suited to provide “rich descriptions of the nature of the coaching relationship” that Denton, Swanson, and Mathes (2007) propose are needed (p. 588).

Furthermore, my belief that the language used is revealing, not in an isolated way that values only the denotations of the words employed, but in a way that is interpretivist—taking the context of the dialogue, of each participant, and of the observer as co-interpreter of the meaning is also congruent with structures of phenomenological inquiry (Schwandt, 2000). As Freire (2000) states,

Consistent with the liberating purpose of dialogical education, the object of the investigation is not persons (as if they were anatomical fragments), but rather the thought-language with which men and women refer to reality, the levels at which they perceive that reality, and their view of the world, in which their generative themes are found. (p. 97)

Relationships are the focus of this inquiry, and language provides evidence of the underlying perceptions that frame those relationships.

The qualitative paradigm was selected because it serves the purpose of the inquiry at hand and honors the voices of those who are engaged in the experience under study. First, the nature of the overarching research question demands a holistic approach that embraces and allows for the inherent complexities (Creswell, 1998; Schram, 2003). Second, the research questions seek to understand the meaning of a phenomenon as it occurs within the natural setting, and this too is a fundamental characteristic of the qualitative paradigm (Schram). Third, Newkirk (1991) argues that a qualitative stance gives voice to teachers’ experiences, and honors the knowledge gleaned through their work, observations, and collected stories. In this study, through the exploration of the interactions of literacy coaches and teachers, I am seeking to understand the meaning and

nature of those interactions to the participants. Shank (2002) points out, “the pursuit of such meaning is a valuable goal in itself and on its own terms” (p. 194).

I am passionately interested in developing a better understanding of coaching relationships. Each participant brings perceptions about what the coaching experience is, and then in the process of the interaction, the meaning of the coaching experience is constituted. My personal history as a teacher who has been coached and my history as a coach have led me to think deeply about the meaning of a coaching experience. I want to be able to better understand and describe the experience of coaching, giving due attention to the context of the adult learning theory that supported its development.

I sought to identify the perceptions that each participant brings and consider the interplay of those perceptions in the coaching interaction. The meaning then, could be compared to a tapestry. I did not yet know the picture (the essential whole), but I came to do so by identifying some of the threads (the parts or themes from various perspectives) and beginning to see the patterns they created. Thus an interpretivist stance, one that holds that human action is intentional and understanding the intentions requires an attempt to take the full context into account, was consistent with my philosophical beliefs and with the purpose of this study (Schwandt, 2000).

Interpretivism, as an epistemological stance, holds that the parts cannot be understood without the whole and the whole cannot be understood without the parts (Schwandt, 2000). Phenomenological sociology is one of what Schwandt describes as the three interpretive traditions. Within this tradition, there is an emphasis on the intentions of social actors and the proposition that the meaning of a given action must be interpreted in light of those intentions (Schwandt). The life world “is constituted in conversation and

interaction” (p. 192). Gubrium and Holstein (2000) point out that from this perspective, a common understanding of reality or “intersubjectivity is...a social accomplishment” (p. 489). Because of the social context of their perspectives, fundamental differences in teacher and coach perceptions might exist, yet through their social interaction, the essence of the coaching experience is created. Thus, only through an exploration of these interactions can an understanding of their meaning be gained.

Lakoff and Johnson (1999) propose that, “mind is part of the very structure and fabric of our interactions with our world” (p. 266), and if the meaning of interactions is to be explored and understood, this cannot be ignored. The meaning is trapped in the words because our thinking is trapped in our physiological processes, thus our words quite literally share our thinking. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) further propose that a metaphor is not simply a way to translate our thoughts, but that our thinking and our actions are metaphorically bound. A metaphor, then, in the sense that Lakoff and Johnson use it, is a “metaphorical concept,” a way of thinking (p. 6). Therefore, within the course of their professional dialogue, the language that teachers and coaches use offers, not only a view of the patterns of language, but also a glimpse into the thinking, the cognitive process and negotiated meaning of coaching.

Through the study, I am seeking a deeper understanding of relationships, namely the relationships between literacy coaches and elementary teachers. Those relationships consist of the meaning that participants make of their interactions, and so, those interactions provide the most direct window into their understandings, the very nature of the relationships. I trust the interactions because I believe that the words, when considered in context, represent the very thinking of the actors who choose them. I have my own literacy coach-teacher

relationships, and I am seeking to set the understandings of my personal experiences with those relationships aside, exploring the relationships of others to gain a deeper understanding of the many forms that such relationships can take in an endeavor to tease out the common threads. I do not believe that I can fully do so, that I can be truly and completely objective, but I hold to the belief that only through the process of trying, can I rise above the tendency to oversimplify coaching relationships by allowing my own experience to stand representative of all coaching relationships. I value my own experiences and knowledge, and bracketing them out is an endeavor, not to purify the study of them as if they were contaminants to be contained, but to separate them in the interest of holding them up to the light. In gaining a deeper understanding of others, I will better understand self, and as I better understand self, I will gain a deeper understanding of others.

Subjects/Participants

Samples for qualitative studies are typically smaller and purposeful (Patton, 2002). I selected a criterion sampling approach to increase the focus as I looked for commonalities (Patton). The first criterion established is that a coach must provide on-site, one-on-one coaching in the area of literacy in an elementary school in order to be included. Whether the coach is called a literacy coach or an instructional coach is not relevant, provided that the coach functions in this role. The second criterion is that the coach must have been coaching in the school for a minimum of one full school year prior to the study in order to ensure that the relationships under study have been sufficiently established.

I began by gathering as much information as possible through websites, looking for systems that employ literacy coaches. Initially when necessary, I contacted the superintendent, assistant superintendent, or curriculum director of each system and conduct an informal interview by phone or email to inquire concerning the system's procedure for granting approval to conduct research and to ensure that there were literacy coaches in the system who met the criteria. Later, when I applied for IRB approval to increase the pace of recruiting, I sent recruitment packets if the website offered evidence that the elementary coaches might meet the criteria.

I followed the appropriate protocol for system approval when one was established. In two cases this required additional IRB approval. In the first case, the system required that principals give consent before they would consider approval. I sought and received approval for an amendment to change the order of recruiting in such cases. Secondly, I sought and received amendment approval to email the contact letters when appropriate rather than mail them.

Typically, I mailed a recruitment packet to a system leader (most often the superintendent) that included the system contact letter (Appendix A). That introductory packet also included a copy of the form that I would be sent to a building level administrator (Appendix B) if the system required that the principal grant permission as well. The packet also contained copies of the letter that would be sent to literacy coaches (Appendix C), the letter that would be sent to teachers (Appendix D), the interview protocol for literacy coaches (Appendix E), the interview protocol for teachers (Appendix F), the follow-up interview protocol for all participants (Appendix G), and the consent form (Appendix H). Except in the case outlined above, once the system granted approval,

I sent a packet to the building level administrators within that system containing copies of the letter that would be sent to literacy coaches (Appendix C), the letter that will be sent to teachers (Appendix D), and the consent form (Appendix H).

Upon system approval and building level approval (when required) I sent the letter outlining my research interests and inviting literacy coaches (Appendix C) to participate. This packet included only the letter of recruitment/invitation and a self-addressed stamped envelope for participants to respond. Initially, I followed a step-by-step process, but this approach to recruiting proved to be sorely inefficient, and I updated my recruitment letters to indicate that sets of participants would be added on a first to respond basis. Once these updates were approved by the IRB, I sent the packets out in mass mailings, sending as many as I could effectively research and compile at a time. Once I have a positive response from a literacy coach, I sent letters (Appendix D) to all the teachers with whom the literacy coach worked. I accepted the first two teachers to express a willingness to participate.

The goal was to have a total of twelve participants, one literacy coach and two teachers within each of four schools. This provided eight coaching sessions and twelve in-depth interviews for analysis along with the reflexive journal. I used complete data sets (one coach and two teachers from the same school). The first data set collected served as a pilot.

Pilot Study

The first set of data collected (from Triad A) was used as a pilot for the recruitment, transcription, and analysis process. The pilot was not completed in its

entirety before proceeding with the study, rather it ran concurrently along with the study, and each phase of the study was tested and refined through the pilot data set. The data from the pilot was not included in final write-up, but conducting the pilot was an indispensable aid to the quality of the study.

In the recruitment process, I encountered issues that would arise again. For example, rather than follow my recruitment procedures as I had outlined in my proposal, the building administrator gave the packet including sample letters to the coach, and the coach in turn asked two teachers to participate, and I received a packet from three participants eager to participate. Because this was not the way I had envisioned recruitment taking place, I consulted with my advisors and methodologist and determined that the way that it had occurred was still in keeping with criterion-convenience sampling and did not pose a problem from that perspective. I also discussed the issue with someone from the IRB and was told that I cannot control what others do, only that I must be true to what I said I would do. This was also an issue that would arise again as only one set of my three remaining were recruited the way the I had outlined.

The pilot offered a valuable lesson in logistics as well. There was a malfunction in the recording of the coach's interview. As I was listening to the tape to transcribe, it suddenly fell completely silent. I became physically ill at the shock of it, and after discussing it with my advisors, determined that I would paraphrase what I remembered from the interview. This was difficult because I had not taken notes to the extent that I expected. I had found that extensive note taking distracted me from really listening to what was being said. It was also at this point that I realized true "thick description" was only possible in the video recordings, but that maintaining an effort toward it in the

interviews was still beneficial (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 1998; Carspecken, 1996). Here particularly, as I worked to paraphrase the participant's responses, I wrestled with epoche. It was difficult to filter for what I expected to hear without the verbatim transcript. This experience was invaluable with regard to my own understanding of the importance of each step in the data collection process.

When I returned for the follow-up interview, I shared what I had written with the coach and she indicated that she liked my wording better. This was simultaneously flattering and deeply discomfoting. My goal was to really hear what co-researchers were trying to share, and while I embrace that I am a part of that process, this felt as if I had overtaken it. Paraphrasing made me feel that my perceptions overshadowed rather than interpreted those of the study participant. I did not complete analysis of the pilot until all data had been collected. I was concerned that the process would make my stance of epoche more difficult rather than facilitate it.

As I transcribed the pilot interviews, I found that my interview protocol enabled me to tap into the kind of information that I was seeking. Following the cassette recorder malfunctioning, I took two recorders to every interview to prevent this situation from occurring again. I still encountered a few instances of statements that were lost due to overlapping voices (two people talking at once) or quiet statements that were imperceptible in the recording, but nothing to the extent of the data lost in the pilot interview.

Ethical Concerns

The process of approval through an Institutional Review Board (IRB), no matter how thoughtfully entered, cannot allay all ethical concerns in the research process. The approach I took, using in-depth interviews rather than surveys, manifests an ethical stance to “treat [participants] as people” (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 668). I trust the self-reporting process and desire to offer participants the opportunity to tell their stories and clarify any ambiguities that arise. Yet the in-depth interview process is only one data collection method within the study, and it alone is rife with additional ethical concerns such as compensation, neutrality, and manipulation (Patton, 2002).

Of these three issues, the one that initially concerned me most was the issue of neutrality. I am a naturally caring person with a background in teaching and coaching. It may be difficult to be non-evaluative in my demeanor. I need to be open and receptive to whatever line of thinking the interviewees share. I will need to consistently communicate interest and a receptive attitude, as a negative response on my part could inhibit the interviewee’s willingness to be open. The issue of ethics was another factor in my selection of the standardized open-ended interview approach. As a novice interviewer it serves to support my thinking through potential ethical concerns in advance as I gain experience in the field.

I sought to gain entry into a realm that the literature indicates requires trust in order to be effective, and I asked coaches and teachers to reveal their honest feelings about the nature of the coaching relationship. Confidentiality was critical. If participants had shared information that could be perceived as negative in any way, whether it is about themselves or others, the information could have caused harm. Within local arenas

especially, changed names and locations afford little protection (Christians, 2000). System names will not be shared, and general descriptions will be used. This makes the use of pseudonyms more effective. Nothing more specific than the accreditation region in which the schools fall was used to help ensure that systems could not be identified through unique demographic characteristics. Sharing candid comments with research participants could seem innocent enough in the moment, yet even if the commentator were not identified, shared comments could potentially harm previously established professional relationships. Such comments hold the potential to undermine collegial relationships as well as supervisory ones. Balancing this need for caution was difficult as I sought to build rapport.

As the researcher, I have an ethical obligation to minimize any risk to the participants. The risks inherent in the design are minimal, and steps will be taken to ensure that even the slightest risk is addressed. I will use a documented informed consent, which helps ensure participants that confidentiality will not be breached, allaying concerns that might cause a degree of stress for some participants. Because participants volunteer, it is less likely that they will experience any discomfort that could be associated with self-disclosure and reflection.

Location/Setting for the Research

A criterion sampling approach was selected to increase the focus as I looked for commonalities, thus each of the schools selected employed elementary literacy coaches as the first criteria (Patton, 2002). I used Internet searches to review school and district websites as well as followed up on leads from personal and professional contacts to identify

systems that employ literacy coaches. The schools were accessible geographically. I began by contacting the appropriate central office staff in four systems to request information concerning the protocol to apply for permission to conduct research. Once my committee and the Human Subjects Review Board approved the study, I began to mail recruitment packets.

Once I received system approval, I followed the protocol established by the system to contact possible participants, which sometimes included acquiring permission from principals before contacting coaches. When required and when not specified, I used the letter to contact the principal (Appendix B). Participants selected a site in which they felt comfortable for the interviews, and the videotaped coaching sessions were conducted in the typical setting within the respective schools. I provided all materials necessary for videotaping. It was important that data be collected in the least invasive way possible. Since so much depended upon the trust participants placed in me as the researcher, it was also important that I demonstrated that I valued their needs and respected their wishes.

Once I had a coach and two teachers with whom the coach worked to express interest, I contacted them to set up a consent form review session. All consent form review sessions were completed with all three participants at once, except in one case where one participant was absent on the date we had selected. I met with her separately at a later date. All videotaping and interviews took place within the schools. All schools were public elementary schools and fell within the accreditation jurisdiction of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

Data Collection

Recruitment was challenging. It was difficult to identify systems that had coaches who met the criteria I had established and to navigate the many different ways that systems receive research proposals. I went through several amendments with IRB to accommodate the process as outlined by systems. I was initially only recruiting in as many systems as I needed at a time, but after an extended period of time, I applied for an amendment with IRB to increase the pace of recruiting. In the end, I sent out as many packets as I could prepare at a time. Often it was ten to twelve packets. Data were collected beginning May 2009 and ending June 2011.

In three of the four schools, the participants altered the recruitment process. In two cases the building administrator gave the samples of the recruitment letters to the coach, and I received an envelope with all three potential participants expressing interest. In one other case, the coach began to ask teachers if they were interested after she agreed to participate. In this case I had already received a letter expressing interest. I asked the coach if any teacher would be bothered by not being included, and she indicated that it would not be an issue. I enrolled the teacher from whom I had received a letter and one of the teachers the coach had invited into the study.

Including the pilot, the data collected consisted of in-depth interviews with four coaches, in-depth interviews with eight teachers, and videotaped coaching sessions with each coach-teacher pair. These three sources of data served to strengthen the study through triangulation, assisting me in ascertaining a clearer conceptualization of the focal point, in this case the teacher-literacy coach relationship, by exploring it from multiple perspectives (Patton, 2002). The videotaped coaching sessions allowed me to act as a less

intrusive observer collecting interactions that occur (Patton). I say less intrusive because the presence of the equipment and the knowledge that the session is being recorded might alter to some extent what the coaches and teachers choose to say. In my personal experience with coaching; however, the presence of another individual significantly alters the dynamics of the conversation. The video camera is more likely to fade into the background than I would be as an intrusive observer.

The in-depth interviews provided the researcher with access to the perceptions and perspectives of the study participants (Patton, 2002). As Fontana and Frey (2000) point out, as the researcher I have an influence on the context, and to some degree, all interviews result in a negotiated text. Because I am a novice in the interview process, I selected a predominantly standardized open-ended interview approach (Patton).

Using a standardized open-ended interview protocol for coaches (Appendix E)⁷ and teachers (Appendix F) afforded the opportunity to give careful consideration to the wording and order of questions that I designed in advance and served to keep me, as the researcher, highly focused, as well as the data collection more consistent (Patton). The standardization piece ensured that I attended to every question on the protocol. I did not, however, hesitate to probe for additional information or clarification.

There is a trade off for every decision made in research design, and in this case the trade off resided in the possibility of over-structuring the interview to the extent that relevant data were inadvertently missed. To counter this possibility, I opted to not limit my use of follow-up probes, and I have include a paraphrasing of Patton's (2002) final

⁷ Appendix E and F are modeled closely after Appendix 7.2 (Patton, 2002) available on pages 423-427. The questioning techniques that were relevant were adapted to the content of this study.

question (p. 379), which provides an unstructured component at the conclusion of the interview to increase the probability of gaining a deeper understanding of the complexity of the participants' perceptions (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The final question prompts the interviewee to share a question that I as the interviewer should have asked but did not. In this way, the interviewee has the opportunity to take the conversation in a direction that the structure of the standardized interview might have otherwise limited. I also asked if I might turn the recorder on again if participants began to share additional thoughts after I had completed the interview protocol.

Original data files were stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home office. Signed permission and consent documents and video and audio recordings were particularly guarded. These had the highest potential for participant identification. The home office was selected as the more secure location given that the researcher's work office is in a public section of the elementary school in which I teach. Colleagues enter and exit freely throughout the day, often with groups of students, to check out and return materials for classroom use. I assigned a capital letter beginning with A to the coach of each school in the order that the data is collected. Each teacher then received the literacy coach's capital letter and a numeral in the order that the data was collected (e. g. A1, A2). Audiotapes were labeled with codes only. A linking list was created and kept throughout the transcription process, and it was destroyed after all initial interview and video transcripts were verified. If during the course of the interview, a participant used identifying information such as the name of other colleagues in the study or the location of the school, brackets were used to insert a pseudonym or generalized terms to further ensure that participants cannot be inadvertently identified through transcripts.

Other IRB amendments included approval to follow a different order of recruitment when the system required that I do so, approval of the correction of a typographical error, approval to recruit via email, approval of the change of Principal Investigator when my co-advisor transitioned to a new appointment at a different college. Upon defense, signed consent forms in a sealed envelope with my name, the name of the study, and the IRB number assigned to the study were submitted to remain locked in a file with the Graduate School for a minimum of three years. Audio and video recordings will remain in a secure location within the researcher's home office for a minimum of three years. Once three years have passed, the recordings will be destroyed.

Analysis

Epoche is not a step, but an adopted stance, an on-going process of remaining committed to uncovering and disclosing biases and suspending judgment (Patton, 2002). I do not hold a naïve belief in my own ability as the researcher to filter out all of my biases and presuppositions, as I know that it will be a rigorous and continual endeavor. I must be as committed to analyzing my own processes and beliefs as I am to analyzing the perceptions and interactions of the coaches and teachers I interview and observe. I reject the notion of a positivist objectivity in this arena, yet I “believe that objectivity is worth striving for” in the quest to understand as accurately as I can the meaning constructed by others (Patton, 2002, p. 93).

Within the context of this stance, I transcribed the interviews and the observations verbatim and took them with me to the follow-up interview to have participants verify accuracy. Reissman (1993) describes the process of transcribing data as “interpretive” for

the way in which I determine to represent it can alter it (p. 13). Reissman (1993) compares the role of the researcher to that of a photographer, for the researcher selects the angle or perspective of the snapshot taken. Just as Lindfors (1999) proposes in an educator's work with children that "The challenge is to hear through the words to the intention that lies behind them and gives birth to them" (p. 64), so is the challenge of analyzing the interview and observation transcripts.

While phenomenological analysis is not a singular construct, I selected Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological model to guide the analysis process since it is congruent with the purpose of the study, namely to determine the meaning or nature/essence of literacy coach-teacher relationships. I selected the model that Moustakas patterns on the work of van Kaam. The first step of this process as Moustakas outlines it, was preliminary grouping or horizontalization, which involved listing the phrases that were relevant to the experience under study. The second step, according to Moustakas, was Phenomenological Reduction, which consisted of identifying the invariant constituents and eliminating redundant or vague phrases. As I engaged in this process, I also removed verbal pauses and clarified casual or colloquial phrases.

Once the invariant constituents were identified, I clustered them into themes, and then I validated or checked invariant constituents and themes against the horizontalization transcript or to the original transcript if necessary. Once verified, the themes and invariant constituents were used to create an "individual textural description" of the experience (Moustakas, 1994, p. 133). Then I created an "individual structural description" that focused on the "underlying dynamics of the experience" (p. 135). Prior to this step the focus was on "what," but here the focus is shifted to "how," because the

underlying structures might have facilitated the development of the phenomena that were being considered (p. 98).

I then created a “composite textural description” considering all of the individual textural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994, p. 137). After that, I created a “composite structural description” (p. 141). Finally I engaged in the process of “textural-structural synthesis” in which I attempted to arrive at the essences of the experience through intuition, drawing upon the insights gained through the previous steps of the analytical process (Moustakas, p. 144).

In keeping with the emergent nature of qualitative research I sought to be “comprehensive and systematic, but not rigid” in my approach (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996 p. 10). Coffey and Atkinson emphasize that there are myriad options for analyzing data, and it is imperative that “research methods...be used in a disciplined manner” (p. 13). Therefore, I outlined and recorded my decision-making process for the purposeful *bricolage* of strategies and making the rationale explicit as it relates to the overall research design (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Trustworthiness/Authenticity

One method of verification that I sought to employ was that of “detailed thick description” (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 1998; Carspecken, 1996). I attempted to record the full context of the videotaped coaching sessions in the transcript, making note of the nuances of physical stance, proximity, and facial expressions. Thick description helped me ensure that I was attending to the context in which the interactions were embedded; the context that interacts with and co-constructs the meaning of the co-researchers’

exchanges. While it was not possible to capture every nuance, I also made efforts toward thick description as I interviewed participants, noting the visible, physiological responses that added color and light to the words chosen. The tone, intonation, and hesitation that were captured on the audiotape provided some descriptions that facilitated more accurate interpretation along with the notes concerning body language and facial expressions that I took during the interview process. The process of transcribing thick description also gave me an opportunity to record my own thinking which further assisted me in my endeavor to bracket my presuppositions. I incorporated three different types of data (videotaped observations, in-depth interviews, and a reflexive journal) in order to strengthen the study's trustworthiness through data triangulation (Patton). Furthermore, I built in an opportunity for participants to review their data transcripts as a member checking procedure in an effort to verify authenticity⁸, and the reflexive journal assisted my efforts to clarify researcher bias (Creswell). Finally, I consulted with my advisor and methodologist to review my decision making process for peer debriefing (Carspecken, 1996).

Discussion

I continue to be deeply interested in understanding the meaning of literacy coach-teacher relationships as experienced by teachers and coaches and their perceptions of its impact on student achievement. This qualitative study of the coaching experience from

⁸ Patton, predominantly drawing on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1986), describes authenticity as “reflexive consciousness about one’s own perspective, appreciation for the perspectives of others, and fairness in depicting constructions in the values that undergird them” (p. 546).

the interpretivist perspective and in the phenomenological tradition was designed to gain access to the essential nature of literacy coach-teacher relationships. Coaches and their colleagues need role clarification and administrators need the language to effectively describe the coaching relationship in order to provide coaching as a powerful professional development context in an era of accountability. Stakeholders need an accurate description and those who would conduct future research need a clearer picture of the literacy coach-teacher relationship. This study provided insights toward those ends.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In this study I explored the nature of literacy coach and elementary teacher relationships as experienced by coaches and teachers, to look for patterns in their interactions that offer insight into that nature, and to examine the metaphors they use to help describe the relationship and experience to others. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section discloses some potential biases that I discovered as I reviewed my reflexive journal and self-interview. The second section outlines the results and is subdivided into three sections to explore the relevant findings for each of the three inquiry domains that frame the research questions. The third section of the chapter is a summary of the findings, and the final section is the conclusion.

Researcher's Perspective

In an effort to help bracket my assumptions and filter my potential biases, I developed a reflexive narrative by “interviewing” myself (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Using the in-depth interview protocol for literacy coaches (Appendix E), the in-depth interview protocol for teachers (Appendix F), and the follow-up interview protocol for all participants (Appendix G), I wrote my responses over a period of time, revising to clarify and elaborate on my thoughts. This format structured my exploration of my own beliefs and experiences as I entered the analysis phase and created a written text to compare with my findings and

critically question my conclusions. Just because I held a belief and then I found it to be true for others does not invalidate it. In my reflexive journal I wrestled with this concept.

I cannot rule out themes that emerge in the data that I expected, to do so would be just another way to silence the voices of those I am seeking to understand, seeking to give voice to. I think epoche is about avoiding pre-judgments...avoiding fast interpretations rather than reflective and thoughtful ones. I am seeking to set aside or quiet my own inner voice to allow the others to rise and be heard unfettered, uncluttered. If, when I raise the volume of my own again, it happens to harmonize with the myriad others, it will not mean that I have failed. Because I too share the experience of coaching, it is in fact likely. I silence my own voice, I listen to each distinct other, and then I listen to the chorus. I am listening for the melody that rises from the collective to capture the song that is coaching.

Thus, the self-interview does not serve as a screener, only allowing those themes that do not match my own to filter through. Rather, it serves a guide for critical review, to highlight my own beliefs and reveal the areas where I need to be most guarded and certain that I am allowing the data to speak.

I am an advocate for coaching. As a teacher I was coached, and I valued it so much that I became a coach when the opportunity arose. I communicate in myriad ways that I believe in the power of coaching. This is quite evident in my self-interview.

I am very concerned in these economic times that the coaching positions will be among the first cut (in fact I already know of such instances), and I think that it is a grave mistake for the long-term growth of a school. I believe that parents and legislators often assume that only the people who are in direct contact with a group of students daily make a difference. I believe in the power of teachers to make a difference in the lives of their students, and I believe in the power of a coach to help them be more effective toward that end. I believe we need to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the coach's role.

Along with this deeply entrenched belief, I am also an optimist by nature, and I tend to frame observations and intentions in a positive way. As I engaged in the analysis process, I asked myself continually if I were remaining true to the co-researcher's intent, and cautiously considered whether I was glossing over or over-simplifying the expressed

meanings. I had to remain committed to accurate representation regardless of whether the data supported the benefits of coaching or not.

An example of an issue of remaining true to the participant's intent arose when one of the co-researchers was describing the process of building relationships by getting to know teachers and what approaches might be effective with them, "I hate to say this, it's almost manipulative, but [...] sometimes manipulation can be a positive thing." My response was somewhat visceral, an internal flinch of sorts. I did not have difficulty monitoring my reaction during the interview, but as I analyzed the data, I struggled with this statement on several levels.

First, I could relate to the comment, and I didn't like that I could. It reminded me that I had felt manipulative at times in my early coaching, and that feeling had made me uncomfortable. Second, on the one hand, this similar experience from my own past made me feel that I understood what the co-researcher meant, and yet, I had to ask myself if I was trying to "soften" the comment for my own benefit, to make it like my own experience and decrease the discomfort it created for me. Third, I struggled with the perceptions others might have about this co-researcher's comment, and I felt an instinct to protect the co-researcher. If I silenced the comment, and I did so due to my own discomfort and not the protection of the co-researcher, it would be unethical treatment of the data. If I disclosed the comment regardless of any potential risk to the participant, I would be neglecting my ethical responsibility to minimize the risk. Ultimately, reading and rereading the context of this statement and working through my own feelings about it allowed me to move past the initial response and accept it into the collective body of data

neither under nor over representing it. Experiences such as this helped me remain vigilant in my efforts toward epoche during the process of analysis.

Additional effort toward a stance of epoche is also evident in the way in which I chose to code the transcripts and clarify meanings when I selected quotes. As I made efforts to incorporate thick description, I had to create a pattern to separate the words of participants, environmental notes, and the more subjective meanings I gathered as I sought to understand the intended meanings of co-researchers. In the next section I outline a key of the visual cues or coding I assigned for clarification.

Coding

Throughout the chapter quotes from the original transcripts or horizontalizations will be included. The coding used to designate meaning within the quote and highlight alterations from the original transcript as verified by the participant is outlined here. I used ellipsis throughout the original transcripts to show the conversational flow, thus un-bracketed ellipsis were in the original transcript. I used [...] when sections that were not germane to the meaning were removed after the transcript had been verified. These sections may have included pauses, verbal pauses, repeated words, and/or incomplete phrases. **Bold** indicates that the word/phrase was stated with particular emphasis. Complete phrases were substituted for the shortened conversational phrases. For example, *kinda* was replaced with *kind of*. Any grammatical or spelling errors not detected by the researcher or the participant during the transcript review process were also corrected. Square brackets that were used in the original transcript contain comments in italicized print. When a grammatical change was made to remain true to the participant's intent, to begin a

sentence with a capital letter that was not in the original transcript, or when words were added for clarification these changes were also noted in [] square brackets in plain font.

To guide my analysis of the interviews, I used the phenomenological methods outlined by Moustakas (1994), specifically the adapted van Kaam approach. As each theme that emerged from the interviews is explored, the textural-structural synthesis, which is a composite of the experience for all co-researchers, will be provided as a summary of the description of that theme (Moustakas). For the video role analysis, I was initially guided by Carspecken (1996), and I added two frames: Killion and Harrison's (2006) coaching roles and Anderson et al.'s (2001) Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, specifically the Cognitive Process Dimension. The exploration of the higher order levels of thinking will follow the role analysis, and then the metaphors will be explored (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Participants

Abigail, Carol, and Martina, the three coaches enrolled in the study, had been coaching from four to six years at the time they were interviewed, and they had all remained in the same school system since they began coaching. Two were recruited into the coaching position and one sought the position after being asked if she knew anyone who might be interested. They all hold at least master's degrees, two hold specialist degrees, and they all have reading endorsement. Two received extensive training for their coaching role. One indicates, "We [...] received **so** much training, it was unbelievable." The other describes a yearlong training that included fieldwork. The third coach received a three-day course through a local educational service agency, and has monthly meetings within her system.

The six teachers enrolled in the study included Donna, Jane, Julia, Kaleigh, Kay, and Susie. Among the teachers the number of years teaching at the time of interviews ranged from six to twenty-one. All participants were certified teachers working in a public school system within the accreditation jurisdiction of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

Results

Inquiry Domain One: The Essence of the Coaching Relationship

Empirical Question:

What is the nature of literacy coach-teacher relationships?

Theoretical Direction:

From a phenomenological perspective, coaching relationships have an essence, and that essence can only be determined by analyzing the interactions and perceptions of those who experience the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

The in-depth interviews with three coaches and six teachers were transcribed and then analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) adaptation of the van Kaam method of phenomenological analysis. Through this process, six themes emerged. The themes are interrelated, yet there are some marked distinctions that prevented me from combining them further. Two of the themes include supporting themes that are more specific and help clarify the larger theme. Because the sub-theme of metaphors informs *Inquiry Domain Three: Self-Reported Perceptions of Coaches and Teachers*, I offer the textural-structural synthesis here, but I reserve the full treatment for that section. Following a description of each

theme, the textural-structural synthesis is given to provide a summary of the nature of that experience for the co-researchers. As outlined in Chapter 3, the textural-structural synthesis was created as the final step in the phenomenological analysis, and it provides a “synthesis of the meanings and essences of the experience” for all co-researchers (Moustakas, 1994, p. 144). The exploration of each theme opens with an introduction and ends with the textural-structural synthesis. A summary of the themes follows.

Theme One: Context of the Relationship

How long a coach and teacher have worked together, the focus of their work, and the culture and climate in which the work is situated are all explored within this theme. Relationships do not develop in a vacuum, and understanding the context is essential to understanding the development and experience.

The foundation for this theme might be better understood through the coaches because they speak more globally to all coach-teacher relationships in their buildings, not only those with the teachers included in the study. Martina expressed the lack of established relationships when she first became a coach. “My first year at this school, it was a brand new school, [...] so we had teachers in the county who came from lots of other schools in the county.” When Carol first came to her current school, teachers “had never had a literacy coach before, and I really created the role.” Abigail captured the clean slate experienced in the beginning by most participants:

I had to work to be accepted number one, because this was a brand new school, [...] they did not put any of the coaches in a school that they had been in [...] prior, so this was a [...] brand new school, brand new teachers, brand new principal, I mean, I had to learn everything.

Newness seems to be embedded in the role change as much as the change in venue. Even the coach and teacher who had worked together for two years previously in another school experienced a sense of newness because of the change in roles.

Three teachers had no previous literacy coaching experiences. Julia explains, “I didn’t even know they [literacy coaches] existed.” She later had a coach in her building, but did not have the opportunity to work with her. Three teachers had experienced coaching relationships prior to their current ones. Kay describes how different the role of the previous coach was compared to her current coach:

It’s a big difference though in the school that I came from before here because we never had that kind of experience with our literacy coach. She mainly monitored us [...] in the classroom and [...] she ordered materials for us, and things like that.

Teachers seem to either not have had expectations at all because of the lack of prior experiences or because the prior experiences were quite different.

This theme creates a frame of reference for the circumstances that existed when the coaching relationships began. The commonalities and differences emerge, and taken together they provide a contextual basis for exploring the relationships as they are currently experienced.

Textural-Structural Synthesis

All three coaches had not taught previously in their current schools, so the relationships were new, and the building of relationships was the central focus. In one case, the coach had worked with one of the teachers previously, but in another capacity as a support teacher. This level of knowing each other gave them a steppingstone, but their new relationship was to be very different. They began their current relationship working together for almost half of the day for a year. This was far more time together than any other co-researchers had experienced.

One of the three coaches works only with the primary (K-2) teachers in her building, and the other two coaches work with K-5. The K-5 coaches are alone in their role in the building, and the K-2 coach has a building partner who shares an office. Two of the three coaches indicate that there is little teacher turnover in their buildings. Because they have few new teachers, they typically have opportunities to develop and maintain the same relationships over time. Half the teachers had no prior coaching experiences, and half had worked with a different coach before coming to their current schools. Two co-researchers indicated that the coaches they had known before served in roles that were fundamentally different from the coaches with whom they currently work, but they did not seem to carry any negative expectations from those experiences.

The number of years that coaches have worked in the schools ranges from four and a half to six years. Topics that the coaches and teachers have focused on include writing, guided reading, interactive writing, and how to integrate science and social studies into the balanced literacy framework. One of the coaches had already experienced a role transition from literacy to instructional, and one was beginning to work with teachers in areas other than literacy. One co-researcher had been trying to implement balanced literacy before she began working with the coach, and this may account for some of the early resistance to coaching that she describes.

Theme Two: Relationship Progression

This theme addresses how the feelings and interactions were experienced as they began and how they are experienced currently. This is a portrait of the evolution of the relationships under study. The clean slate of the context was not completely positive. A

void of expectations leaves a vast amount of space for fear of the unknown to occupy. To understand the unsettled, fearful nature of the beginning of the relationship is to wonder how they could ever survive, much less thrive. Kaleigh captures the early angst:

[Y]ou know when you first meet somebody, and they're in her position, you might be [...] nervous and or worried...Oh, I don't know what they're thinking? Are they [...] just going to **critique** me all the **time**? Or are they actually going to be considerate and [offer] constructive criticism?

Kaleigh had not worked with a coach previously, and she didn't know what to expect, but not knowing what to expect is only one of the sources that induces the discomfort that characterizes early coaching relationships. Donna describes how the early coaching felt like being corrected or judged.

I guess maybe at the beginning, we were a little bit [...] as a staff a little bit resistant to her because [...] we had tried to do it on our own, and we thought we were doing it right.

The degree and source of the anxiety that marks early coaching may vary, but all participants experienced it to some extent.

The relationship develops and these early anxieties tend to fade with time and give way to comfort. Kaleigh offers a glimpse into the development of the relationship indicating that she doesn't feel anxious with the coach now. "We know each other a little bit better personally **and** professionally. [...] [J]ust knowing each other better, I feel more comfortable around her." Susie's description indicates that the comfort level extends into a sense of safety. "I feel really comfortable with her giving me feedback [...] because [...] she really says it in a way that's non-threatening." Abigail even uses the term "relaxed" to describe the current feelings associated with coaching. "Sometimes, I don't even realize that [...] it's happening." Within this theme how the coaching relationship

progresses from apprehension to satisfaction through time and shared experiences is explored.

Textural-Structural Synthesis

A few participants characterize the early relationships as involving some resistance, but most describe a period of time marked by nervousness, self-doubt, worry, or fear. Many feelings were connected to unclear expectations either concerning the coach's role or implementation of literacy practices. For the most part, it seems to be the thought of what coaching might be, a fear of the unknown that tends to evoke these feelings rather than the coaching itself. One co-researcher describes wondering whether the coach was "going to pick me apart." Fears included worrying about being observed, about doing the right thing, about whether the coach would like what you're doing in the classroom. One co-researcher describes early coaching sessions as "very nerve-racking, because I thought, I'm not doing anything right [*laughs*] [as if amused at the reflection]."

All three coaches describe an early focus on building relationships. For these co-researchers relationships are experienced as the fundamental first work of coaching and building them includes getting to know learning styles, learning personalities and differentiating the approach accordingly, and a willingness to help in informal ways. The relationships are purposeful, a pathway to the work ahead. Establishing the coaching role and setting expectations were part of this process as well. For coaches first year interactions were marked with demonstrating and modeling, presenting oneself as "a partner," and building credibility as a fellow teacher. One participant describes the early coaching as feeling "artificial," and one described a sense of teachers "testing" her with difficult situations. Most coaches describe little interest on the part of teachers that first

year, but when they helped those teachers, the success created additional interest that spread. There weren't many coaching sessions during year one for those co-researchers. There were interactions, but the interactions did not meet their definitions of coaching.

All co-researchers experience the current relationships as having grown more comfortable, better, or deeper over time. Coaches experience most current relationships as positive or pleasant and all teachers describe the coaching relationship as positive, great, awesome, or friendly. One participant describes conversations as more "authentic" and "deeper." The relationships tend to be driven by an intense craving for professional growth, and a desire to give or receive help. Whether that hunger is a practical, in the moment need or a long-range desire to improve varies, but the experience of coaching is gratifying, and so it continues. Over time the mutual work provides shared experiences and positive results with students, and this builds trust and excitement. The relationships and work seem to spiral outward and upward, like a growing tree expanding in several directions simultaneously.

Time is a recurring theme for all participants. As it relates to the coaching relationship, time is required for their growth. For all participants the coaching relationships are different now than they were in the beginning. For most the anxiety has subsided. Even the one co-researcher who still experiences nervousness when the coach observes her experiences increased self-esteem and confidence afterward. The relationship has progressed to the extent that being coached is marked with a sense of reciprocity, eagerness, and dependability. Some describe coaching as having progressed from "instructive," focused in professional literature, and about initial steps, toward more "supportive," collaborative, and collegial work. Coaching is extremely dynamic, a

delicate balance of push and pull. To be coached is to be safe enough to ask any question, share any weakness and expect that the expressed need will be met respectfully.

Theme Three: Coaching Definitions and Contexts

This theme addresses what happens during coaching and what modes of interaction are typical of coaches and teachers. The eclectic nature of coaching is evident in the myriad descriptions of the co-researchers. There is a strong sense of sharing and dynamic flow. Sometimes the expectations for the structure of the interactions are well established, but even when this is the case, there still tends to be an informal feel. Jane captures this overarching tone when she describes the pre-conference, observation, and post-conference cycle of her typical one-on-one coaching context.

[M]ost of the time [the coach] will email me and ask me if there's anything that [...] I feel or I can come to her but [...] anything I need to work on. [...] [F]or example, this past time, [...] I felt like there was a writer I needed some help with because he was so **high** [...] has learned everything I taught this year and just really ran with it [...] I felt like I just wasn't doing enough to lift him as a writer. [...] I told her that I needed help with that, so she offered to come in, [...] of course, and [...] we always have a pre-conference, [I] kind of let her know what's going on, [...] what it is that I would like for her to help me with. [...] [T]hen she gives me some ideas that I can try [...] then I'll [...] schedule a time for her to come in [...] to observe me [...] teach the lesson or to conference or whatever it is [...] that she's discussed with me. [...] [A]fter we've done that [...] she may step in and help some, or she might just [...] stay back and just listen and observe. [...] [T]hen we'll meet again afterward, and discuss [...] how things went and if we thought that they went **well** [*high pitched with emphasis*] [stated as if she wished she could say it always goes well, but that isn't realistic], or if there's something else we need to try, that type of thing.

Jane casually shares the essence of the purpose of each step in the expected process, but there is no sense of restrictiveness associated with it.

Julia and Jane work with different coaches, and both coaches captured conversations before and after the teaching as examples of typical coaching in the videos.

The informality of the coaching context that is evident in Jane's description are echoed in Julia's comments:

[W]hat she usually does at the beginning of the year is she will send out a needs list, what do you [...] feel is your greatest need, [...] and how can I help you. And then we will fill that in, and then [...] we will sit down, and we will meet usually after school, and we will talk about how she can help us. And then she will come into our classroom [to help].

Julia's explanations highlight the informal feel, and they also bring another common thread to the surface, that of working together in and around classroom settings. The theme of coaching contexts and definitions explores the how, where, and when of the experience of coaching.

Textural-Structural Synthesis

Coaching contexts and definitions are numerous. For all participants, coaching at least began with a focus in literacy. Coaching tends to have a specific focus for a period of time, and that focus is sometimes set by the system, sometimes by the coach, and sometimes by the teacher. Teachers typically initiate coaching interactions, but sometimes coaches contact teachers. For the most part even when there is a specific focus, the teacher still sets the coaching agenda, at least in part, within that focus. The goals of coaching are often "layered," and they may include goals for students, goals for teachers, and goals for the school. Teachers have professional learning with the coach. This may take the form of courses, classes, or book studies, but for the most part they tend to consider coaching the interactions that take place outside of that setting. Coaching for most co-researchers follows an expected format, but even among those co-researchers, coaching is often experienced as informal.

Informal coaching is described as “quick,” perhaps “unplanned,” or “casual.” It is characterized by teachers “dropping-in” or “stopping-by.” It often happens in the hallway, the lunchroom, the coach’s office, or the bookroom. On the opposite end of the continuum, coaching is experienced as formal with more rigid expectations and norms that guide the types of interactions. Even for the majority of co-researchers who experience the coaching process as including a conversation before the teaching of a lesson, a time spent with the coaching in the classroom either teaching or observing a lesson, and a conversation after the lesson, the experience seems to fall in the middle along the continuum of informal to formal. The structure guides the flow, but it doesn’t appear to restrict it. Informal and formal coaching interactions often take place in the classroom.

Coaching is conversation. It is experienced as questions and answers, sharing ideas with or bouncing ideas off one another, planning, and giving and receiving feedback in positive ways. Coaching is collaborative. It is described as “working with,” collegial, an opportunity to learn and work “through the hard parts.” The frequency of this work varies. Students are a focal point of coaching. Questions might center on specific students and the work is often grounded in student data. One co-researcher describes coaching as “looking at specific kids, [...] really helping kids,” and another considers the coach someone who comes in as another teacher and helps you to look at students and student learning. For several of the participants coaching is commonplace. Their colleagues and/or friends in the profession often have coaches in their schools as well. In a few cases coaching is experienced as the coach releasing the teacher from the duties of her classroom to observe a peer followed by a discussion of the observation.

Sub-Theme Three A: What the Coach Does

Within this theme the numerous tasks in which the coach engages are outlined. The coach's day is filled with more than coaching. For example, the coach may order materials or plan for and teach a course. These tasks may or may not take place during what is considered coaching and they may or not directly support what the participants consider coaching to be, thus this exploration of the larger role of the coach informs the definitions and contexts of coaching, but the tasks included here are not limited to that realm. Some of the data that inform this theme are more global characterizations and some read like a To Do list.

Kaleigh provides a global statement that sums up what the coach's job is, "to me the role of the literacy coach is to assist us in any means, any ways possible in implementing balanced literacy [...] and improving literacy instruction." It is evident from Kaleigh's view that there are countless tasks that could fall within the coach's domain. Julia also outlines what the coach does in similar broad strokes:

I think that the literacy coach's role is to be an aide to the teacher to help the teacher in any way [...] that she needs it, [...], teaching a new strategy, [...] being able to present a lesson [...] in a new and fresh way, giving ideas, giving feedback, [...] and sometimes we get bogged down in the way we do things and a new and fresh perspective [...] is better, and [...] I think that's where the literacy coach comes in is to help us with [...] what we have existing and help us become [...] better language arts teachers.

Julia's comment illustrates how the ordering and organizing of materials or reading to learn about new strategies may not actually be coaching yet tasks such as these may support coaching. The tasks outlined as part of this theme are numerous. In fact, the role of the coach is considered expansive, almost all encompassing as the list unfolds. Carol shares:

[There are] all sorts of little things that I do that really aren't on a schedule...conversations I have with teachers [...] things that they need to know, and I'll find out for them...I'll call someone and do that [...] Also, I help with RTI...help the teachers set goals, and find appropriate interventions.

Carol's comments more specifically illustrate some of the activities that Julia's description suggested. The sense that there isn't anything you cannot ask of the coach pervades in this theme.

Textural-Structural Synthesis

Coaching is experienced as helping. Coaches help teachers with instruction; in a few cases, it might be in "life skills," math, science or social studies, but in most cases they help in balanced literacy. Coaches help teachers find and use resources, lesson plans, and interventions for RTI⁹. Coaches help teachers choose starting places, set goals, and stay focused. The coach may help with implementation, change, or completing assessments. They may help use those assessments along with other data to help make decisions about grouping or instruction. Coaches plan and prepare with teachers for their work with students. They plan and prepare for their work with teachers as well, which includes being a learner, researching to find answers to questions, new resources, or new strategies. One coach describes part of the role as helping teachers "move forward," and about half of the participants describe what the coach does as being connected with professional growth. Almost half of the co-researchers experience what the coach does as uplifting, encouraging, affirming, validating, or empowering.

Coaches model, demonstrate, and observe. Much of their work is done in the classroom. Coaches work with students and teachers, but mostly their work is with

⁹ Response to Intervention (RTI) is the process by which students who are not achieving academic success receive additional support.

teachers and focused on improving instruction. They have conversations, many, many conversations. They provide feedback, constructive criticism, ideas, advice, or tips in ways that are “nonthreatening.” One coach struggles with wanting to talk too much, and strives to listen well. Monitoring is embedded in the coaching tasks, and one coach describes evaluating even though she isn’t an evaluator. This same co-researcher experiences some conflict in her role when teachers aren’t implementing, and it is her job to help them. Coaches often collect data and monitor implementation and improvement.

Two of the three coaches include several tasks in their descriptions that most of the teachers do not. They schedule work with and among teachers. They often document how, where, and when they work. Two of the coaches also include walkthroughs¹⁰ as part of their experience. A few of the co-researchers include ordering, sorting, and/or organizing materials as part of the coach’s role.

Sub-Theme Three B: Explicit and Implicit Metaphors

An overview of the comparisons that coaches and teachers make to help others understand their experiences is offered here. Some of these descriptions were direct responses to questions calling for concrete comparisons (Appendix E & F), and some arose in the course of the interview. In some cases co-researchers explained why they chose the metaphor. Martina goes a step beyond sharing the illustration or purpose of the comparison to sharing some of the context that she believes may contribute to the construction of the metaphor:

[B]ecause I’m [...] a little bit older [...] I’m in my early fifties, a lot of the teachers here are my daughter’s age. Some are [...] in their thirties [...] and early

¹⁰ Walkthroughs are typically unscheduled, brief observations in the classroom for the purpose of data collection.

forties. [...] [S]ometimes [...] they'll call me mom [*laughs heartily*] so, [...] it's more of a nurturing kind of [...] feel, I guess, in a lot of ways, although [...] I can be direct, [...] and they've received that okay. I guess, like a momma [*shared laughter*].

Martina's description offers insight into her conceptualization of the nature of coaching and raises questions concerning how her conceptualization might affect the actions she takes as a coach.

The implications of the metaphors will be fully explored in *Inquiry Domain Three: Self-Reported Perceptions of Coaches and Teachers*. They are included here because as a sub-theme, they further illuminate the definitions and contexts of coaching.

Textural-Structural Synthesis

The metaphors that co-researchers use to share their experiences of coaches and coaching are rich and varied. Most participants shared several metaphors. Only one did not indicate any metaphor other than coaching explicitly or implicitly. The coaching relationship was described as being like a mother/child relationship. There was no indication of condescension in this comparison, and it originated from two co-researchers, one coach and one teacher. The anchor seemed to be in the concepts of nurturing and growing. Also connected to these key concepts is one participant's metaphor of the coach as a gardener. These metaphors seem to rise from feelings of being valued and protected.

Two co-researchers also described the coach as a guide. One describes the coach as "a bridge" to "kind of help" teachers "get where they need to go." The core concept of movement and journey connect this comparison to that of the coach as guide. There is an underlying expectation here that the coach has some knowledge of the journey and will be able to help the teacher navigate it more effectively and/or efficiently than he/she

could alone. Two participants describe the coach as a cheerleader, with one comparing the relationship to a “pep talk.” Inherent in this comparison is the idea of being encouraged, excited, or energized.

One participant compared the relationship to that of a mentor/mentee, and this is similar to the comparison that two others made to that of a teacher/student, with one of them specifying that the coach is “a more experienced teacher.” Another somewhat connected metaphor was the coach as a counselor. One participant used coaching, but specified a baseball or football coach. She went on to describe coaching as “another tool in the toolbox to help me [...] become a better teacher.” Another tool comparison was the coach as “a mixer or blender.” In this metaphor the coach is something “extra [...] to make things easier.” Other comparisons include coach as a scaffold and a sounding board. Coaching is compared to having an extra set of hands or an extra pair of eyes. Embedded in these comparisons is the sense that the coach is practical, useful, and helpful. Sounding board goes one step further, however, and indicates that the coach is viewed as safe, and she helps you clarify your own thoughts and ideas.

One participant described the coach as “salt and sugar” because “she enriches what we do.” These items are thought of as kitchen staples; they are essential ingredients. One considers the coach like sandpaper. She can help “smooth out” the “rough spots.” It is interesting to note in this comparison that the teacher is also considered sandpaper, and the goal is to be smooth and flat. It’s the coach and teacher working together that creates the smoothness in the metaphor. Collegiality is inherent here. One implied metaphor is that of the coach as an artist or architect. She “has a bigger picture of how all balanced literacy works together from kindergarten through fifth grade, so she can help us put the

pieces where we are into place.” Again the coach’s knowledge base or expertise comes into play.

Theme Four: Coach/Coaching Perceptions

Within this theme the definition of what a coach is and how the coach and coaching are perceived by the participants are examined. Jane illustrates the perception that it’s safe to tell the coach when something isn’t working. “[I]f I try [something that she suggests] and say, ‘That didn’t work,’ she comes right back and says, ‘Okay, let’s try something different.’” Her comment further demonstrates that she perceives the coach to be flexible and responsive to her observations and requests. The perceptions also illuminate the position of the coach within the culture and climate of the school.

Textural-Structural Synthesis

The coach is an approachable and available resource to whom you can turn when you need ideas, answers, or help getting out of “a rut.” The experience is positive. Coaching feels relaxed, easy, and even friendly. The co-researchers see the coach as someone with knowledge, training, and/or experience. The coach is simultaneously a peer and something more. Two co-researchers describe the role of coaching as being in-between teachers and administrators. Coaching is experienced as learning, improving, and growing. There is a sense of safety to disclose one’s weaknesses and trust that the needs expressed will be addressed in ways that are flexible and respectful. “I never feel [I] need to be fixed [*light laugh*] or [*light laugh*] [as if amused by the question] anything like that.” The coaching role is seen as challenging, busy, and evolving.

Sub-Theme Four A: What Coaching Is Not

Within this sub-theme, the role of the coach is more clearly delineated through the sharing of what a coach is not or does not do. These perceptions were often shared in response to questions about misconceptions of others (Appendix E & F), and sometimes they arose as part of the contrast provided to illustrate a point. Susie describes the misconception that she believes others have and that she held at first, “That the literacy coach is coming to watch you to find something wrong with what you’re doing.” Kay speaks to the misconception that coaches are “trying to come in and see if you’re [*light laugh*] [as if it’s a ridiculous notion] doing your job or not doing your job.” Awareness of what participants believe about the misconceptions of coaching offers additional insight into what they consider the coach and coaching to be.

Textural-Structural Synthesis

Some participants emphasized the distinction between the coach and an administrator. The coach doesn’t have “authority.” A few co-researchers clarified that coaching is not evaluative. Some spoke to the misconception that the coach is out to get you or coming in to find something that you are doing wrong. The coach is not an informant. One pointed out that the work of a coach isn’t “busy work.” One participant drew a distinction between coaching and other meetings, sessions, or classes that aren’t productive and can be anxiety inducing. One co-researcher highlighted that the coach is not just a data collector. Two participants shared that the coach doesn’t have all the answers. One co-researcher emphasized that the coach is not there to “do everything for you.”

Sub-Theme Four B: Perceptions or Reports of Others

This sub-theme speaks to what the participants believe or have been told about how others perceive coaching. Naturally, some misconceptions arise here as well and a few overlap. Those misconceptions outlined previously, however, related more directly to the coach or coaching. These perceptions tend to be broader in scope or more specific to how coaching makes others feel. Kaleigh offers an example of a broader misconception. “I think a lot of people think it’s [an] easy job.” This comment sheds light on one facet of her school culture, but it is explored here rather than in *Sub-Theme A: What Coaching Is Not* because it doesn’t necessarily add clarity to a definition of the coach or coaching role.

Jane speculates about the feelings of colleagues, “if the coach comes in a lot, maybe they feel like they’re not doing what they’re supposed to be doing, or they think that the coach thinks that.” This is an example of a comment that is more specific to the feelings that might be associated with coaching rather than a definition of what actually occurs during coaching.

Textural-Structural Synthesis

The co-researchers shared numerous examples of what they believe others perceive about coaching. Several of these perceptions of what others believe are negative. For some participants, the perception of how some of their colleagues feel about coaching includes apprehension as if “they’re under a microscope,” or the fear that the coach might “tell on them.” Early on, one co-researcher perceived the coach was received with cautiousness and hesitation from others. A few report that others still perceive the role as administrative or evaluative, and some are still resistant to work with the coach. One

co-researcher believes that teachers fear data are being used to compare them. One believes that others think the coach is trying to tell them what to do, and she has had teachers express to her “that they just don’t really think that the county should be spending the money for” coaches. One expresses that teachers see a coach as someone who isn’t “in the trenches anymore.”

A few co-researchers believe that some colleagues have in the past or continue to view the coach’s role as easy or fun, a job to be desired. A few co-researchers feel that their colleagues understand the coach’s role. One expressed the belief that she and her colleagues implement balanced literacy correctly now. One participant expressed that she believes her work in the classroom with children and teachers is “probably what my principal considers to be the most important thing that I do.” One co-researcher perceives that others’ feelings about coaching have improved. One perceives that the coach enjoys coming in to work with her. Another perceives that the teachers with whom she works know and accept that she will likely push them to meet with her. One co-researcher believes that teachers might be nice on surveys because “I think they know we’re going to read them.” A few participants believe their colleagues see the coach as either an expert or someone who had received more training, and they know they can go to her for help and support.

Theme Five: Evidences/Credits

Within this theme the positive outcomes that coaches and teachers believe result from coaching are explored. Abigail demonstrated the joy that often accompanies these perceptions of success when she spoke to data that indicated increased student achievement even before being asked in the interview, “[*with hands cupped around*

mouth and quieted enthusiasm] [O]ur third and fifth grade scores were awesome!
[*researcher laughs*] So, [*laughing softly*] I'm excited! Go balanced literacy!" Like
Abigail, other co-researchers expressed delight concerning the benefits of coaching.

While Abigail connected the benefit directly to student achievement and state test scores, Susie's descriptions of the benefits of coaching were more anecdotal and embedded in the daily work of teaching and learning.

I'm going back to that first year when I had Martina in my room, and I was the host teacher [...] oh wow, there's so much the students gained and I gained from that experience. [...] seeing two teachers communicate [...] Martina would coach me in front of the students. Seeing that communication between two teachers right there in front of them. That language that we used, [...] they were hearing it was right in front of them. And [...] knowing that sometimes teachers have to talk and [...] make decisions about the best way to teach you.

Susie's observations are not grounded in numerical data, yet they hearken to the larger goal of creating a climate of lifelong learning through modeling it in daily practice.

Donna proposes that student achievement is impacted through coaching in an indirect way, "while **she** [the coach] hasn't directly impacted their [students'] achievement, she has taught me ways that **I** can impact their achievement." Kay brings the issue of the coach's impact on teacher development to light, "I think she [the coach] has really helped me grow as an educator. [...] [S]he's really broadened, [...] the strategies and things that I use." The perceptions coaches and teachers have concerning the impact of coaching and the evidence they cite that supports those perceptions offer significant insight in the nature of coaching.

Textural-Structural Synthesis

All co-researchers experience increased student achievement as part of coaching. One associates rising scores with coaching and the implementation of balanced literacy. One co-researcher believes student achievement rises because coaching empowers teachers to impact student achievement. One believes it's because coaching helps provide more individual attention, more ideas, and another perspective. Another believes the growth is made possible because of new instructional strategies, and similarly another believes it's because coaching provides resources for teachers and that in turn supports students. Although giving themselves credit for the improved student achievement was only specifically expressed by one co-researcher, a sense of teacher efficacy is manifest in all of these beliefs. The belief that desired outcomes can be achieved leads to the effort.

Almost half of the co-researchers cite improved state test performance as evidence of increased student achievement. One named a specific student case. A couple of participants named improved writing as evidence, and one named improved reading and improvements on school administered assessments. A few did not reference any specific data examples. A few of the co-researchers cite the benefit of coaching for the staff or specifically for themselves. One participant cites the modeling of a learning relationship by the coach and teacher as a benefit for students. Student achievement is a focus, but in a wide variety of ways.

Theme Six: Values/Opinions

Within this theme the beliefs participants hold about the importance or purpose of coaching or any related issues are brought to light. While they may be interrelated with

those perceptions of the outcomes of coaching explored in *Theme Five*:

Evidences/Credits, these perceptions tend to be much broader in scope. For example, Kay was one co-researcher who credited coaching with a positive impact on students and teachers. Kay's perception of those outcomes was addressed in *Theme Five*. Within the current theme, *Theme Six*, Kay's opinions about the qualities of a good coach that may contribute to those outcomes are explored. Kay believes it's important, "not just to have a coach, but to have a coach in the school that is supportive." The opinions and values explored here are diverse, and they provide a glimpse of some of the nuances of the beliefs about coaching that co-researchers hold as well as the context in which those beliefs are situated.

Textural-Structural Synthesis

Coaching for most co-researchers is an avenue for professional growth. About half of the co-researchers experience friendship or friendliness between the coach and teacher. The best aspects of the coaching relationship all center on learning. For coaches the best parts are being able to observe so much good teaching, to continue learning, and to see teachers grow. One coach believes it is not possible for every teacher to like her. She is sometimes tempted by the thought of returning to the classroom, yet she describes the coaching role as rewarding. All coaches relate the importance of recognizing and honoring the differences in the teachers with whom they work. For teachers, the best aspects are the accessibility of help, support, and ideas from someone who is familiar with current resources and research and can lead you in the right direction to help your students while saving you time.

All co-researchers value the benefits they receive from coaching. They express joy, gratitude, or a sense of good fortune for their coaching experiences and/or their learning and growth. They all believe coaching and coaching relationships are important for teachers and students. “I guess that’s the bottom line is to [...] help children [...] reach their potential.” The co-researchers experience a high sense of self-efficacy, commitment to growth, and professionalism. A few of the co-researchers emphasized the increasing demands currently placed on teachers. One even indicates that these demands make the coach’s role necessary. If teachers “didn’t have on-the-job training, I don’t know that” the type of instructional practices required today “would be effective.”

When it comes to changing the relationships, a couple of co-researchers wouldn’t change anything. One is concerned that she might be a little too close to situations at times, and she desires “a little bit more” distance and objectivity. A few participants simply want more time with the coach. One even jokes that she would like to “clone her.” One co-researcher would like to see that the role is clarified to be sure that coaches are not expected to act as “police.” Another would like to see structures in place to ensure that everyone makes use of coaching opportunities. One believes that the coach would benefit from returning to the classroom for a period of time to “reconnect with the pressures that are on teachers.”

Summary of the Themes

The six themes describe the structure of the phenomenon of coaching as experienced by coaches and teachers. Coaching has a beginning point that is followed by the development of a relationship that progresses from tentative/nervous to safe/fulfilling.

Coaching occurs in a variety of ways and in multiple contexts, but it is consistently grounded in conversations and collaboration. While coaching is not evaluative in a supervisory way, it is a rich source of ideas, feedback, and constructive criticism. Coaches are expected to do much more than coach, and these tasks can support or interfere with coaching. The metaphors used to describe coaching are numerous, but they tend to be connected to core ideas of nurturing, growth, protection, efficient/effective work, and learning as a journey.

The way that coaching is perceived and enacted is intricately interconnected with the culture and climate of the context in which it occurs. Although specific data may or may not be named, the experience of coaching has strong connections for co-researchers to student achievement and teacher growth. Coaches and teachers hold numerous values and opinions that shape the context in which coaching occurs and provide a snapshot of the personal fulfillment they experience through it. Together these themes provide a vivid description of what it means to be coached.

Inquiry Domain Two: Coaching Interactions

Empirical Question:

What language patterns emerge during literacy coaching interactions, and what do those patterns indicate about the nature of coaching relationships? To what extent does the language include references to increased student achievement and data?

Theoretical Direction:

Meaning is socially constructed as actors play out their roles. The dialogic process offers insight into the role sets, and thus it provides one window into the essence of the coaching relationship (Carspecken, 1996).

I transcribed six videotaped coaching sessions between the coach and each of the two teachers in the triad. The coaching session for two of the triads (four of the videos) consisted of a conversation that took place before the observation and a conversation that took place after the observation. In one triad (two of the videos) the coaching session consisted of a single conversation.

To engage in role analysis I examined and labeled the transcripts that recorded the interactions of the participants as they engaged in a coaching session (Appendix J). After completing the phenomenological analysis and reviewing the roles that had emerged, I returned to the literature. I reviewed the roles as outlined in several coaching texts, and I found in Killion and Harrison (2006) a set of roles that brought together a great deal of the literature. I had initially thought that I would create labels for each of the roles that I identified as I analyzed the videos, but when I considered the roles that emerged in the phenomenological analysis, all of them were taken into account within one or more of Killion and Harrison's definitions. At the time that I made this decision, I had only identified one role that was mentioned, but perhaps not given ample treatment according to the results of this study. I labeled this role *Encourager*, and I will address it fully in the sub-section entitled *Role 4: Encourager* as I discuss how it was evident in the analysis. I remained open to the emergence of additional roles that did not fit the selected definition set.

Additionally, I selected Anderson et al.'s (2001) Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy, specifically The Cognitive Process Dimension, to identify the level of thinking that was evidenced during the coaching interactions. I labeled each segment of conversation (separated by turn-taking) with the highest level of thought expressed (Appendix J) by teachers and coaches. Some expressions were simply verbal affirmations that moved the conversation along, and some were verbal expressions of gratitude or response to something shared that did not contain enough information to be categorized; thus, they were not labeled according to the level of thinking.

Additionally, a section of meaningful text might have been split and so there were instances where the level of thinking could not be assigned because the thought was incomplete. When this occurred, I coded with the word "continues" to indicate that the thought continues below. Once the highest level of thinking had been evidenced and labeled, I coded with the word "continued" to indicate that the full expression of the thought continued from above.

Due to the nature of the data collection the teacher roles were limited in scope and were not labeled. Within the one-on-one coaching context under study, every teacher selected something to work on or discuss with the coach; thus, every teacher essentially came to the table as a learner, a seeker of ideas or advice, and I only labeled the level of thinking that was evident.

Introduction to Roles and Levels of Thinking

Killion and Harrison (2006) outline ten roles in *Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teachers and School-Based Coaches*. The definitions provided here are from the text. In

the following section entitled *Roles Played and Levels of Thinking*, I will outline how the roles were applied in the study and the connotations that emerged in the process. The roles are listed here in the order that they are presented in the Killion and Harrison (2006) text. Not all of these roles were found in the analysis of the videotaped coaching sessions. They are included here to facilitate a later discussion of what was not observed in the videos.

Resource Provider – When serving in this role, coaches help “locate information, resources, materials, equipment, and examples of best practice, delivery of instruction, assessment of student learning, organization, or management of the classroom” (p. 31).

Data Coach – Coaches who “help teachers use data most effectively and to facilitate their understanding of data” (p. 35).

Instructional Specialist – Coaches who seek to “ensure that teachers implement effective, research based instructional strategies” (p. 47)

Curriculum Specialist – Coaches who help “ensure implementation of adopted curriculum” (p. 41).

Classroom Supporter – Coaches who work “directly with teachers in their classrooms” (p. 53). The work tends to follow a progression from modeling/demonstrating toward co-teaching, and then observing and giving feedback on instruction or management (p. 53).

Mentor – In this role, a coach is working “to increase the instructional skills of the novice teacher and support schoolwide induction activities” (p. 59).

Catalyst for Change – Coaches “create disequilibrium with the current state as an impetus to explore alternatives to current practice” (p. 81).

Learner – Coaches strive to “model continuous learning, keep current, and to be a thought leader in the school” (p. 87).

Learning Facilitator – Coaches “coordinate a wide range of learning opportunities for teachers to develop teachers’ knowledge, attitude, skills, aspirations, and behaviors” (p. 67).

School Leader – “to work collaboratively with the school’s formal leadership to design, implement, and assess school change initiatives to ensure alignment and focus on intended results” (p. 75).

Levels of Thinking

In accordance with Anderson et al.’s (2001) designations of the Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy, the overall level of thinking is assigned a number according to the following scale: Remember 1, Understand 2, Apply 3, Analyze 4, Evaluate 5, and Create 6. Within those designations, Anderson et al. provide more specific verbs that are coded using decimals. For example, Checking 5.1 falls within the Evaluate 5 level of thinking. I listed the verbs in the document with the number designation including the decimal for ease of reference, and I often added a description to record why I assigned a particular level to a section of text. Coding to the finer increment and adding the description allowed me to double check the whole number level of thinking assignment more easily, but the increments are too fine to see the overall picture. Therefore, the summary of the levels of thinking that follows the outline of the roles played is categorized by the whole number to better facilitate the discussion.

Roles Played and Levels of Thinking

The roles that were evident in the analysis are outlined below. They are listed beginning with those that were evident during all of the videotaped sessions and then in order of decreasing frequency. When two roles had the same number of coaches engaged in them, as was the case with *Instructional Specialist* and *Learning Facilitator*, both of which were evident in all six videos, they are arranged alphabetically. The levels of thinking evident in the role analysis will be explored following the descriptions of the roles played.

Role One: Instructional Specialist

Coaches acted as *Instructional Specialists* in all six coaching sessions. The role typically was played simultaneously with other roles rather than in isolation. Within this role, the coach was most often sharing possible effective strategies or critiquing the teacher's use of or planning for an effective strategy as seen in Table 4.1 following. The nature of this role requires that the coach have an understanding of a range of effective instructional strategies to share.

Table 4.1 Excerpt from Role Analysis – Instructional Specialist Example

	Possible Claim(s)	Role(s)/Bloom's Level
<p>Martina Brown: And so, to me, [...] you have to think [quickly] on your feet [<i>teacher laughs</i>] [as if in amused agreement] [...] in a conference like that when you have a goal set for a kid, and then it's not going there, you've got to kind of know something else maybe to do that you could teach him.</p>	<p>I think the choice you made here is valid. It fits what we know about quality instruction.</p>	<p>Classroom Supporter / Instructional Specialist / Evaluate: Critiquing 5.2 (validating the teacher's decision)</p>

Role Two: Learning Facilitator

The role of *Learning Facilitator* was also evident in all six coaching sessions. It was most often played through the coach providing explicit teaching, simply giving the teacher information relevant to the topic. Sometimes it was played via questioning that promoted

reflection and higher order thinking for the teacher, and sometimes it was played as the coach clearly demonstrated the planning of a possible option for a future lesson as in the example in Table 4.2 following. While the coach did not appear to have arranged this opportunity to teach about how to model in order to scaffold learning, she did seize it, and because she has knowledge of the overall learning goals and the teacher’s background knowledge and experience in a given area of inquiry, she is uniquely positioned within her school to do so. Thus, I elected to assign the role of learning facilitator in such instances.

Table 4.2 Excerpt from Role Analysis – Learning Facilitator Example

	Possible Claim(s)	Role(s)/Bloom’s Level
Carol Johnson: And I think if I were you, I would probably model [<i>leaning away to see chart</i>] where it says, “I liked the way,” I can’t see around the chairs [<i>laughs lightly and leans in the other direction</i>] “I liked the part when Michelle,” [...] “dressed Moka up like a girl,” I might even model for them adding a [...] sentence to that.	I have something to add that I think might be helpful.	Classroom Supporter / Instructional Specialist / Learning Facilitator / Create: Generating 6.1 - creating a possible option for the lesson

Role Three: Curriculum Specialist

The role of *Curriculum Specialist* was played in five of the six coaching sessions. The curriculum specialist role was typically evident in references to state standards and awareness of the standards above and below the grade level where the conversation was focused. As a curriculum specialist, the coach was most often directing the teacher’s attention to the standards and how to use them, so it was quite common for curriculum specialist and instructional specialist roles to be played simultaneously. An example is shown in Table 4.3 below. Additionally, in most of the coaching sessions where the curriculum specialist role was played, the standards were mentioned specifically, but in one, the coach’s understanding of the expectations of the standards is evident even though the standards are not named.

Even in the videos where a direct link to the role of curriculum specialist could not be justified in the transcript, it is likely that the coach’s understanding of the state standards was still guiding the conversation, and the role of curriculum specialist was running beneath the surface. Even when playing the role of Resource Provider, the coach must be aware of whether the resources are a good fit instructionally and in terms of curriculum standards.

Table 4.1 Excerpt from Role Analysis – Curriculum Specialist Example

	Possible Claim(s)	Role(s)/Bloom’s Level
Carol Johnson: ...I want to do. [<i>both pause to take notes</i>] Are there any other standards that you want me to [...] bring into the lesson that you really think we need to work on?	We must focus on the standards.	Classroom Supporter / Curriculum Specialist / Understand: Interpreting 2.1 - Clarifying

Role Four: Encourager

The role of *Encourager* was also played in five of the six coaching sessions. *Encourager* is not one of the ten roles outlined by Killion and Harrison (2006). Within the role of School Leader, which essentially has a school-wide focus, Killion and Harrison specified, “Through informal conversations, the coach champions school and teacher successes” (p. 76). This cursory reference was insufficient to define the extensive display of enthusiasm and celebrations evident in the data. The *Encourager* role emerged in the analysis process. References to the coach as “cheerleader,” references to the conference as a “pep talk” and descriptions of the support that coaches provide in the in-depth interview analysis led me to consider adding the role of coach as “cheerleader.” After engaging in role analysis and considering the manner in which coaches fulfilled this role, I settled on the term Encourager. The use of the role was extensive. At times the Encourager role was played in isolation, but in most cases it was played simultaneously along with the role of

Resource Provider, Classroom Supporter, Curriculum Specialist, Instructional Specialist, and/or Learning Facilitator. See Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4 Excerpt from Role Analysis - Encourager Example

<p>Abigail Schultz: ...but [...] what...I think maybe [...] we've determined conferencing the way you're doing it is right. I mean the ones that are [<i>sweeps hand from left to right</i>] to a certain level we've already got them there. It's not that we don't want to conference with them...</p>	<p>Possible Claim(s) You are on the right track, and here's why.</p>	<p>Role(s)/Bloom's Level Instructional Specialist / Learning Facilitator / Encourager / Understand: Explaining 2.7</p>
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Role Five: Classroom Supporter

This role was evident in four of the six coaching sessions. Because those four coaching sessions were structured around an observation (a shared classroom experience) the *Classroom Supporter* role was the overarching role that coaches played. In the conversation before the observation, coaches assisted the teacher with planning for the lesson. Whether the coach or teacher taught, the lesson was planned collaboratively. After the lesson, the discussion focused on reflection (Table 4.5), feedback, and planning for next steps. In one of the two cases where the role of *Classroom Supporter* was not played, the teacher requested the *Classroom Supporter* role take place for a later session.

Table 4.5 Excerpt from Role Analysis – Classroom Supporter Example

<p>Martina Brown: And so, [...] that was our goal [...] during that conference. So, during the conference, I noticed that he was pretty determined that he was going to write about ninjas.</p>	<p>Possible Claim(s) I share your goal. I will name the things I noticed. (other pair of eyes)</p>	<p>Role(s)/Bloom's Level Classroom Supporter / Analyze: Attributing 4.3 (the student's performance)</p>
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Role Six: Resource Provider

In three of the coaching sessions, the role of resource provider was played. The coach typically provided the actual resource and some guidance to help the teacher use it. The coaches did not plan the lesson with the teacher in these cases, but they did generate possible lesson ideas. The role of resource provider as it was played in this study was interesting because there was a sense that the coach was pushing the teacher toward increased independence. In this way, it seems to have a strong link with the metaphor of coach as a scaffold, which will be explored in *Inquiry Domain Three: Self-Reported Perceptions of Coaches and Teachers*.

Table 4.6 Excerpt from Role Analysis – Resource Provider Example

	Possible Claim(s)	Role(s)/Bloom's Level
Abigail Schultz: And one thing I want you to understand too, is that determining importance and synthesizing are in the [...] same chapter because they [...] a lot of times they go hand in hand [<i>making eye contact and using hand gestures</i>].		Resource Provider / Learning Facilitator / Understand: Exemplifying 2.2

Role Seven: Data Coach

The role of data coach was played in two coaching sessions. I limited the assignment of data coach to those examples in which the actual data was in front of the coach and teacher at the time and the interpretation and instructional implications of the analysis were explicitly discussed. Data sources were referenced in other coaching session conversations, but they were not explored collaboratively. In both coaching sessions in which the data coach role was played the data being analyzed were student writing samples. See Table 4.7 following.

Table 4.7 Excerpt from Role Analysis – Data Coach Example

	Possible Claim(s)	Role(s)/Bloom's Level
Abigail Schultz: [<i>extending hand toward mini book and pointing</i>] And here, you notice, she's also been able to spread [...] her words across different pages...	I see something you haven't mentioned yet.	Data Coach / Analyze: Differentiating 4.1

Role Eight: Learner

The role of *Learner* was identified in one video transcript. The reference was quite brief, but it seemed a powerful example of how the coach remains a colleague. Even though she may be perceived as having a certain level of expertise, she models that teachers are always learners. This role not only sets an expectation and climate for ongoing learning, it also creates a sense of safety to learn because the coach doesn't have all the answers either.

Table 4.8 Excerpt from Role Analysis – Learner Example

	Possible Claim(s)	Role(s)/Bloom's Level
Carol Johnson: ...I know, and I'm excited to see what I come up with because I don't really know [<i>hearty shared laughter as coach leans in toward teacher</i>] right now. But, it'll be a challenge...	I will learn, and I value the opportunity to learn.	Learner / Classroom Supporter / Evaluate: Critiquing 5.2 - judging the chance to plan something new and grow as positive

Roles Not Played

The three roles identified in Killion and Harrison (2006) that were not evident in the role analysis were: *Mentor*, *School Leader*, and *Catalyst for Change*. *Mentor* by definition would not have been evident due to the fact that it requires a new teacher, and no new teachers were included in the study. It is possible that *Catalyst for Change* not being evident in the videotaped coaching sessions is related to the fact that in the captured coaching sessions teachers were already seeking assistance and new ideas, thus there was no need under these circumstances for the coach to serve in this capacity. Finally, *School Leader* is a school level role and would likely not be captured through an exploration of

one-on-one coaching. While it did not manifest in the role analysis component of the study, there was extensive evidence in the in-depth interviews that the coaches who served as co-researchers engage in this role.

Levels of Thinking

In order to examine the levels of thinking I began a new document and copied and pasted from the role analysis document each example of higher order thinking demonstrated by the teachers into one column on the left and the description of the coach's role(s) and level(s) of thinking that immediately preceded it on the right (Appendix K). I then took each of the three levels of higher order thinking (Analyze 4, Evaluate 5, and Create 6) as outlined by Anderson et al. (2001) and considered all of the roles and the level of thinking in which the coach engaged immediately prior. For a combined summary, see Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9 Higher Order Thinking and Roles Played

Level of Thinking (Teachers)	Role(s) Played Prior (Coaches)	Levels of Thinking Prior (Coaches)
Analyze 4	Classroom Supporter Curriculum Specialist Data Coach Instructional Specialist	Remember 1 Understand 2 Analyze 4 Evaluate 5 Create 6
Evaluate 5	Classroom Supporter Curriculum Specialist Data Coach Encourager Instructional Specialist Learning Facilitator Resource Provider	Understand 2 Analyze 4 Evaluate 5 Create 6
Create 6	Classroom Supporter Curriculum Specialist Data Coach Encourager Instructional Specialist Learning Facilitator	Understand 2 Analyze 4 Evaluate 5 Create 6

Analyze

Examples of what teachers analyzed include student behaviors, student work samples, and suggestions made by the coach. Teachers engaged in analysis as the coach played the role of *Classroom Supporter*, *Curriculum Specialist*, *Data Coach*, and/or *Instructional Specialist*. The levels of thinking that the coach demonstrated prior to Analyze being evidenced by teachers included Remember 1, Understand 2, Analyze 4, Evaluate 5, and Create 6. Only occasionally was the coach's level of thinking evident prior to the teacher engaging in analysis higher than the teacher's. Most often the coach's level of thinking appeared lower but prompted for higher order thinking on the teacher's part.

Evaluate

Teachers evaluated student performance, student readiness for content, their own performance, and ideas the coach shared. Prior to this level of thinking being evident in the teachers' comments, the coaches played the roles of *Data Coach*, *Classroom Supporter*, *Curriculum Specialist*, *Encourager*, *Learning Facilitator*, *Instructional Specialist*, and/or *Resource Provider*. The levels of thinking the coaches demonstrated as they played those roles included Understand 2, Analyze 4, Evaluate 5, and Create 6. Again the coach's level of thinking was typically lower, however in some cases, the teachers critiqued the coach's analysis, critique, or in several instances the list of planning possibilities the coach had created.

Create

The highest level of thinking evidenced by teachers occurred following coaches playing the roles of *Classroom Supporter*, *Curriculum Specialist*, *Data Coach*,

Encourager, Instructional Specialist, and/or Learning Facilitator. The levels of thinking that coaches demonstrated as they played those roles included Understand 2, Analyze 4, Evaluate 5, and Create 6. Most often, the planning in which teachers engaged was preceded by a clarifying question or a paraphrase on the coach's part, both of which fall into the Understand 2 level of thinking. Occasionally the coach and teacher engaged in truly collaborative planning where both evidenced the Create 6 level of thinking.

Summary of the Roles and Levels of Thinking

Eight roles were identified in the role analysis. Seven were congruent with the roles established in the Killion and Harrison (2006) text, and one emerged (*Encourager*). The roles identified included: *Classroom Supporter, Curriculum Specialist, Data Coach, Encourager, Instructional Specialist, Learner, Learning Facilitator, and Resource Provider.* Two or more roles were often played simultaneously during coaching interactions. The roles identified here are congruent with the roles described in the interview analysis. In the interview analysis, however, two additional roles were indicated, those of *School Leader* and *Catalyst for Change*. The only role outlined by Killion and Harrison that did not emerge in the study was that of *Mentor* because it requires by definition a novice teacher, and no novice teachers were enrolled in the study.

Although the role of *Data Coach* was only played in two of the six videos, the references to the use of data to guide instruction were widely prevalent. The *Data Coach* label was only applied when the coach and teacher were analyzing the data together and the coach was facilitating the analysis, interpretation, and planning for next steps. In the videos in which the *Data Coach* role was played, the data that were examined consisted

of student writing samples. The types of data referenced in the other videos included writing samples and anecdotal observations of student performance. When compared to the interview analysis, the use of data in the videos is highly focused and in the moment. In the interview analysis, coaches revealed more details providing a clearer picture of the data used to measure student achievement. Teacher references to student data were made, but were typically less specific.

With the exception of Apply 3, the levels of thinking evidenced by coaches and teachers ran the spectrum from Remember 1 to Create 6. The absence of Apply 3 is likely due to the structure of the study. The classroom observations were not recorded, and that is the snapshot that would most likely be able to capture evidence of application. Also, due to the fact that I labeled only according to the highest level of thinking, it is highly probable that there are additional levels of thinking not captured here that took place as a necessary part of engaging in the process of the higher level thought. For example, one must analyze in order to adequately evaluate.

It was also interesting to note that the level of thinking that was evident on the part of the coach as she prompted for higher order thinking from the teacher often appeared low, typically within the Understand 2 level. Clarifying questions fall into this level, and such questions were often followed by the teacher engaging in Evaluate 5 or Create 6 levels of thinking. It stands to reason that underneath the level of thinking evident in the coach's question there was a higher-level process that led her to ask it. Somehow, she had to arrive at the question she deemed most appropriate to ask, but her process occurred beneath the surface, without any verbalization for the researcher to analyze. Thus, the levels of thinking collected here are those that were readily and directly confirmable within the transcribed

text. Higher order thinking by teachers and coaches was evident in every coaching session recorded, in the group of four videos that included pre and post conferences built around a shared classroom experience and in the group of two videos that consisted of one meeting with no shared classroom experience.

Inquiry Domain Three: Self-Reported Perceptions of Coaches and Teachers

Empirical Questions:

What language do teachers and coaches use to describe their perceptions of coaching?

What metaphors might be used and what might these metaphors reveal about the nature of literacy coach-teacher relationships?

Theoretical Direction:

The metaphors that we use offer insight into the way we think, thus offering a different window into the essence of the coaching relationship (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Introduction to Metaphors

Here the metaphors that emerged as a theme in *Inquiry Domain One: The Essence of the Coaching Relationship* are further explored. The metaphors that teachers and coaches offered explicitly or implicitly are outlined in Table 4.10 following. They are divided according to whether the reference was made to the coach, coaching, or to the coaching relationship.

Table 4.10 Metaphors of Coaches and Coaching

Coach	Coaching	Relationship
Mother/Mom	Extra Pair of Hands/Eyes	Mother/Daughter
Blender/Mixer	Guide	Mentor/Mentee
Sandpaper	Tool in the Toolbox	Teacher/Student
Artist/Architect	Raising Children	Pep Talk
More Experienced Teacher		
Bridge		
Scaffold		
Cheerleader		
Sounding Board		
Salt/Sugar		
Gardener		
Flexible Guide		
Counselor		
Football/Baseball Coach		

A closer examination of the implications of the metaphors lead to the identification of several common threads. When the similar metaphors were combined and clustered according to those common threads, four clusters emerged: *Nurturing*, *Tools*, *Journeys*, and *Enrichment*. These clusters and corresponding metaphors are shown in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11 Clustered Metaphors

Nurturing	Tools	Journeys	Enrichment
Mother/Mom/Daughter	Tool in the Toolbox	Bridge	Salt/Sugar
Mentor/Mentee	Blender/Mixer	Guide / Flexible Guide	Pep Talk
Teacher/Student	Sandpaper	Artist/Architect	Scaffold
More Experienced Teacher	Sounding Board		Cheerleader
Gardener	Extra Pair of Hands/Eyes		
Counselor			
Football/Baseball Coach			
Raising Children			

Cluster One: Nurturing

The metaphors of Mother/Mom/Daughter, Mentor/Mentee, Teacher/Student, More Experienced Teacher, Gardner, Counselor, Football/Baseball Coach, and Raising Children

share the common thread of growth, nurturing, and a level of expertise. These metaphors are consistent with the conceptualization of the coach as having a skill or knowledge level that is above that of the person being coached. They also have sense of belonging, safety, or protection. A gardener will tend her crops, be certain they have what they need, defend them against weeds, frost, and animals that might destroy them, and take pride in her harvest. A counselor protects clients and knows what questions to ask to help a client think through the decision making process.

Mentor/Mentee is the only metaphor that was not necessarily evident in the video role analysis or the in-depth interview, but this is only on a technical note. The Mentor/Mentee relationship is dependent on one of the participants being a novice or beginner, and none of the teachers in the study were in their first or second year of teaching. However, mentor/mentee still fits, for as Julia so aptly describes:

[W]hen I came to [current school] I had never done [...] small guided reading groups, and [...] I had never done the reader's workshop, and [...] I had never done the DRA. [...] I was in my nineteenth year of teaching, and it was like teaching for the first year.

The common threads of this cluster were evident in several of the other themes that emerged from the in-depth interviews and in the role analysis of the videotaped coaching sessions. Growth, safety, and the coach's expertise were all components in the themes of *Relationship Progression*, *Coach/Coaching Perceptions*, *Evidences/Credits*, *Values/Opinions*, and in the sub-theme of *What the Coach Does*. In the video analysis they were particularly manifest as the coaches played the roles of *Classroom Supporter*, *Curriculum Specialist*, *Instructional Specialist*, *Learning Facilitator*, and *Encourager*.

Cluster Two: Tools

The metaphors of a Tool in the Toolbox, Blender/Mixer, Sandpaper, Sounding Board, and Extra Pair of Hands/Eyes share the common thread of being practical objects that help one accomplish a given task. This metaphor is rich with connotations of choice and purpose. In each of these metaphors, the tool is something that the person who has the need selects. The tool is matched to the need and the person decides when and how to use it. These connotations that extend from the common thread are also consistent with several other themes that emerged in the in-depth interview analysis, and the role analysis of the videotaped coaching sessions.

The underlying tenets of choice and purpose that bind these metaphors are most directly evidenced in the themes of *Coaching Contexts and Definitions*, *Evidences/Credits*, and *Values/Opinions*, as well as in the sub-themes of *What Coaching is Not*, *What the Coach Does*, and *Perceptions or Reports of Others*. In the interview analysis participants described often choosing their goals for coaching as well as choosing when they met with the coach, and in every videotaped coaching session the teacher established the agenda. Choice and purpose in the way the coaching is utilized most directly linked to the coach's role as *Classroom Supporter* and *Resource Provider*.

Cluster Three: Journeys

The metaphors of Bridge, Guide/Flexible Guide, and Artist/Architect all imply a journey and assistance on the journey. Learning as a journey is exemplified in the metaphor of the bridge, which connects where one is currently to where one wants to be. Guide/Flexible Guide again reinforces the idea that a coach has a certain level of expertise. She has been there, and she can help make your journey more efficient and even more

enjoyable. She can help you avoid the most difficult stretches of the trip. Whether or not those who envision the coach as guide anticipate a final destination is unclear. Therefore, I will limit my discussion of the metaphor to state that the guide seems to have knowledge of points of interest if not final destinations. One participant commented that in terms of balanced literacy, “I’ve almost kind of worked myself out of a job. In a way [...] when it comes to **that** initiative.” The implication here is that she has moved on to new initiatives. The journey continues, and there are always new bridges to be built.

Artist/Architect is the metaphor that is the least obvious of those that belong in the journeys cluster, but I have elected to include it here because of the way it emerged. I arrived at Artist/Architect from a co-researcher’s comment about the coach having “the big picture,” and thus it was the blueprint imagery that led me to add this metaphor to the journey cluster. The coach is framed here as the “keeper of the map,” thus, this metaphor is closely linked to that of guide.

Here again, the common threads that bind the metaphors of journeys are evident in the other themes that emerged from the in-depth interviews and from the role analysis. Specifically, the concepts of working together over time and of the coach helping and demonstrating that pervade *Coaching Definitions and Contexts*. Among the roles that emerged in the video analysis, those of *Classroom Supporter*, *Learning Facilitator*, *Resource Provider*, *Data Coach*, *Curriculum Specialist*, and *Instructional Specialist* all require the skill level and expertise inherent in the common threads that weave throughout the journeys cluster.

Cluster Four: Enrichment

The metaphors of salt/sugar, pep talk, cheerleader, and scaffold all share the common threads of boosting and uplifting. Salt and sugar can be found almost anywhere. They are staples of the American pantry. They are ingredients that improve or intensify the flavors of other foods. This metaphor implies that the teacher's work is being built upon, improved, not destroyed or altered beyond recognition. A pep talk is an energy giving experience that bolsters courage and excitement. Here the image of the coach is one who enriches a teacher's capacity to get in the game. This metaphor is very closely connected with that of cheerleader, which evokes a similar sense of intensifying energy. Scaffold as a metaphor could have been clustered with tools, but in teaching, it generally isn't the learner who chooses the scaffold, rather, it is the instructor who implements it. Therefore, it seemed a better fit with enrichment because of the boosting quality the scaffolding of the coach provides for the teacher.

The common threads of the enrichment cluster were so pervasive in most of the other themes that emerged through the in-depth interview analysis and within the role analysis, that the role of *Encourager* was created. This role appears woven into every other, and it seems most closely connected to the idea of safety, the safety that allows the risk of learning to be taken.

Summary of Metaphors

Four clusters of metaphors emerged from the phenomenological analysis of the in-depth and follow-up interviews: *Nurturing*, *Tools*, *Journeys*, and *Enrichment*. As the metaphors were explored, they aligned with and shed new light on the additional themes

identified in the phenomenological analysis. They also aligned with the roles that coaches played in the role analysis of the transcripts of the videotaped coaching sessions.

Results Summary

The research questions were organized into three inquiry domains, and the results were organized accordingly. *Inquiry Domain One: The Essence of the Coaching Relationship* was explored through a phenomenological approach analyzing nine in-depth and follow-up interviews. Six themes emerged: 1) *Context of the Relationship*, 2) *Relationship Progression*, 3) *Coaching Definitions and Contexts*, 4) *Coach/Coaching Perceptions*, 5) *Evidence/Credits*, and 6) *Values/Opinions*. Two of these themes contained sub-themes. *Theme Three: Coaching Definitions and Contexts* contained two sub-themes: *What the Coach Does* and *Explicit and Implicit Metaphors*. *Theme Four: Coach/Coaching Perceptions* also contained two sub-themes: *What Coaching Is Not* and *Perceptions and Reports of Others*. Each of the sub-themes further illuminated the larger theme. Taken together the themes shed light on the essence of the coaching relationship.

Role Analysis was conducted on six videotaped coaching sessions. Eight roles were evident in the coaching interactions. Seven of them were consistent with the roles outlined by Killion and Harrison (2006), but one emerged in the analysis, the role of *Encourager*. A component of the *Encourager* role was mentioned within one of the Killion and Harrison (2006) roles, but its treatment there was inadequate to address the extensive data in this study that indicate that the role of *Encourager* is prevalent. Within this data set *Encourager* is a role that is often played in combination with other coaching roles. The roles further

illuminated the nature of the coaching relationship and were congruent with themes that emerged in the interview analysis.

The sub-theme of *Coaching Definitions and Contexts: Explicit and Implicit Metaphors* was explored further to address *Inquiry Domain Three: Self-Reported Perceptions of Coaches and Teachers*. From this exploration four metaphor clusters emerged that provided insight into the nature of coaching relationships: *Nurturing, Tools, Journeys, and Enrichment*. Each of these clusters correlated with other themes from the interview analysis and roles that were evident in the video analysis.

The different theoretical directions of the three inquiry domains served to triangulate the data, allowing each set of results to inform the other. There is strong alignment among the domains that illuminates and clarifies the nature of literacy coach-teacher relationships.

Transformational Synergy

The concept of *Transformational Synergy* captures the essence of the coaching relationship. Through the phenomenological approach the themes that emerged illustrate *Transformational Synergy*. As I considered the findings in each of the inquiry domains, I reflected on the commonalities, fluctuating fluidly between the specific examples from the data and the synthesis of the whole. I considered the many ways in which growth and change played integral roles in the conceptualization, piercing like arrows through multiple layers of the context and experience. I thought about examples of growth and change in the biological world. I considered metamorphosis, but a metamorphosis happens once in a lifetime. Biological examples that are developmental are also inadequate because they imply

that these changes will take place naturally, without effort or decision. The caterpillar does not choose to become a butterfly, and the child does not choose to become an adult.

Teachers and coaches choose to grow. One can choose whether to transform and one can choose how. Unlike the butterfly's transformation, these changes can happen daily. They can be big or small. Like mathematical transformations they can be reversed or rotated. Though the relationships and interactions are tentative in the beginning, coaches and teachers invite one another into this work and make choices concerning its focus and methods, and in this way the coaching process is transformational.

I also reflected on the energy and excitement that I sensed in interviews, saw in the videos and transcripts, heard in voices, and felt in myself as I laughed and sighed aloud throughout the analysis. The growth, change, and excitement do not reside in the recipients of coaching alone. The energy does not flow in one direction but is recursive for all participants as they encounter new ideas, possibilities, successes, and encouragement from one another. The highly collaborative and ever expanding nature of the work makes the coaching process synergistic. *Transformational Synergy* is the essence of the coaching relationship.

Conclusion

Phenomenological inquiry facilitated my exploration of the nature of literacy coach-teacher relationships. Through this process I gained insight into the lived experiences of nine co-researchers, three literacy coaches and six teachers and deepened my understandings of the essence of literacy coach-teacher relationships. In the following chapter, I will outline the implications of these findings as they relate to my research questions, the literature, and

my own professional practice. I will also address the limitations of the study and make recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In this chapter I summarize the research and relate the findings to the implications that they hold. This chapter is divided into six sections. The first section is an exploration of the findings in light of the research questions. In the second section I relate the findings to the literature. The third section includes my personal reflections on the findings as well as informal observations and the implications of both for my practice. Limitations of the study are outlined in section four. The fifth section holds recommendations for future research, and the sixth contains concluding remarks.

Research Questions

Here I will focus on a synthesis of the implications of the findings in relation to the research questions. For the purpose of this discussion, I have combined the questions from each of the three inquiry domains into one list. They are as follows:

- What is the nature of literacy coach-teacher relationships?
- What language patterns emerge during literacy coaching interactions, and what do those patterns indicate about the nature of coaching relationships?
- To what extent does the language include references to increased student achievement and data?

- What language do teachers and coaches use to describe their perceptions of coaching?
- What metaphors might be used and what might these metaphors reveal about the nature of literacy coach-teacher relationships?

The goal of this qualitative inquiry was to deepen my understandings concerning the nature of literacy coach-teacher relationships. Using a phenomenological approach I have explored the complexities of the relationships as experienced by literacy coaches and teachers at the elementary level. As I engaged in the van Kaam method of phenomenological analysis as outlined by Moustakas (1994), six themes emerged that add dimension to the nature of the relationships. The relationships are established in a given context that provides the foundation for their development. They evolve over time moving from initial uneasiness and anxiety along a continuum toward increased comfort, safety, and often friendliness.

Literacy coach-teacher relationships are highly focused on the work of the classroom and purposeful. In this regard they are somewhat symbiotic, with the coach and teacher cooperating to implement best practices, and identify and meet the needs of students. As small successes are experienced and celebrated and sincere encouragement is given and received, excitement and energy for the work builds and the relationships develop into something greater than the sum of their parts. The essence of the relationships as they are experienced can be described as *Transformational Synergy*. The energy of growth and change feeds forward, becoming both an invitation into the work and a reward of engaging in it. The descriptions of the six themes of the relationships derived through

textural-structural synthesis and of the essence of the coaching relationship may prove helpful to those seeking to deepen their own understandings of the coaching relationship or to share their understandings with others.

The patterns that emerged during the role analysis of the videotaped coaching session support the idea that the roles identified in the current literature, particularly as synthesized and outlined by Killion and Harrison (2006) are reflective of coaching as experienced by the co-researchers. The one additional role that emerged, that of *Encourager*, is worthy of further study and consideration. It has potential to be an influential component in developing the climate necessary for learning transfer. This idea will be further developed in the next section entitled *Findings and the Literature: Supporting Learning Transfer*.

The nature of coaching relationships as revealed through the exploration of the interactions between literacy coaches and teachers is consistent with the nature that was revealed through the phenomenological analysis of the interviews. This triangulation lends trustworthiness to the idea that the nature as it emerged from each perspective is accurate. One of the implications of the findings related to the nature of the interactions is that it may be possible to assess whether the coaching relationships in a building are conducive to the desired outcomes by observing the interactions of coaches and teachers, and it may be possible to influence those relationships by restructuring the format of the interactions. Coaches in the study seemed to have a sense that this may be the case. Those in leadership positions who are interested in fostering the development of coach-teacher relationships should consider the types of interactions they encourage or require.

The language of the interactions of coaches and teachers was often centered on student data. The data tended to be student writing samples or anecdotal observations. Within the interviews, all co-researchers believed that coaching positively impacted student achievement, but not all co-researchers named specific data to support the claim. The coaches in the study more often named specific data markers that are used to measure achievement such as state standardized test scores. The implications here are threefold. First, the roles of coaches appear to include a focus on student achievement data. Understandings of that data, the conclusions drawn from them, and the goals based on them need to be explicitly shared with teachers to further enhance the process of data driven instructional planning. Second, shared goals and understandings of data and the use of data can only strengthen efforts toward better meeting students' needs. The role of data coach is one that might be utilized more often to potentially intensify the impact on measureable outcomes. Finally, the role of data coach is a defensible need in this current era of accountability, and this should be considered when articulating the role to all stakeholders.

The language teachers used to describe their perceptions of coaching was very enlightening, particularly from the standpoint of the implications of the metaphors used. If as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) propose, the metaphors we use shed light on our thinking, then it's worthy of considering whether the metaphors may in fact guide the interactions, and if so, how that might be used as a way to build coaching relationships and shared understandings of the role of the coach. I do not intend to indicate that we can simply exchange one metaphor for another and clear up all the mysteries surrounding a very complex relationship. I am, as Shank (2002) describes qualitative researchers,

“committed to the notion that there is always more to understand” (p. 121). The findings indicate that the metaphors shared were congruent with the other perspectives of the nature of the relationship. Sharing and discussing these metaphors, as well as others that might emerge in the course of conversation may hold potential for assisting school leaders with the establishment of the coaching role as it is being initially implemented or developing it further once it is in place. Exploring multiple metaphors added contours and shading to my image of the coaching relationship.

Findings and the Literature

Learning Transfer

Yelon and Ford’s (1999) model of learning transfer as multidimensional served to frame the discussion of coaching as a professional learning context, and it now serves as a very effective frame on which to map the findings. The coaching I was privileged to observe through the videotaped sessions and analyze via the transcripts was highly focused on open skills, those skills that require a high level of adaptation and flexibility in application. The teachers and coaches were clearly engaged in “deep learning” most of the time (Fullan, 2005, p. 22). Along with the evidence of an open skills focus during the interactions of coaches and teachers, the many of the themes that emerged in the phenomenological analysis of the in-depth interviews also highlight a focus on open skills.

There were however, reminders of or references to certain tasks that according to Yelon and Ford’s (1999) model would more aptly be described as closed skills that had already been addressed. For example, several participants referred to having learned how to do certain components of balanced literacy. Donna captured this when she described the

coach in the beginning as “definitely **in**structing us on how to do things correctly.” This current focus on open skills, positions the coaching that is taking place currently as identified in the study on the development end of the continuum that runs from training to education to development.

Additionally, along the continuum of supervision versus autonomy outlined by Yelon and Ford (1999), the observed interactions, metaphors used, and relationships described in the interviews suggest that the coaching taking place falls toward the autonomy end. Coaches have a great deal of flexibility defining and carrying out their roles, and teachers have flexibility in selecting a focus for the coaching. The characteristics of the goals typically being selected by the teacher and the coach honoring and supporting those goals make the coaching conversations consistent with Freire’s (2000) description of a *dialogic* process, contributing to rather than inhibiting freedom.

Supporting Learning Transfer

The literature also indicates that drawing upon the learner’s intrinsic motivation supports learning transfer (Anis, Armstrong, & Zhu, 2004; Kinman & Kinman 2001; Kontoghiorghes, 2002). The interviews revealed that this condition for supporting learning transfer was being met as coaches often looked to teachers to guide the agenda for their coaching sessions. Additionally teachers and coaches alike described a desire to continue growing professionally. It seems to me that much of the excitement expressed in the interviews and evident in the videos is likely generated from the personal fulfillment that results from this tapping of the internal drive of the individual.

In order for learning transfer to take place, the emotional component cannot be ignored, for negative emotions inhibit transfer (Seo, 2003; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee,

2002). The role of *Encourager*, which emerged through the phenomenological inquiry and was further identified in the role analysis of the videotaped coaching sessions as well as the exploration of the metaphors, may serve to facilitate the development of an emotional context conducive to learning transfer. It is conceivable that this is why the role was found to be so pervasive. It appears from the study that coaches are actively seeking to create the type of positive emotional climate that is required to support learning transfer.

What was less evident in the study was whether the goals of the organization were clearly defined, communicated, and supported by the workplace organization and environment, which, according to Romme and van Witteloostuijn (1999) and Yamnill and McLean (2001), is fundamental for a personal development focus to be an effective structure to support learning transfer in the workplace. There were in fact some comments that indicated that goals of the organization and the workplace environment needed to be clarified and streamlined toward these ends. The early struggles with unknown expectations are evidence that the role might not have been defined by the organization initially.

Furthermore, the change that Abigail desired concerning clarification that the literacy coach cannot be the “literacy police or the instructional police” is evidence that the goals of the organization were unclear, perhaps even conflicting. I personally believe from a common sense perspective the potential power of this one tenet cannot be overstated. At every level of learning, when the vision is clarified, the outcomes are improved. It is only fair to all involved, whether directly or indirectly, to be clear about the purpose of coaching.

Reflections and Implications for Practice

Implications of the Findings

The findings that addressed the research questions have caused me to deeply reflect on the implications for my own daily practice as a coach. The first of which is nature of the coaching relationship. The following quote from my self-interview captures in my experience what I believe Martina was describing as the “artificial” nature of the conversations when coaching was new:

In the beginning, (this was shared with me later, I didn’t know it at the time) teachers at one grade level called the preconference “pre-op” and the post-conference “post-op.” We all laughed about it when they shared it, but it really made me think about how “clinical” the early coaching really felt.

Martina later described the conversations as more “authentic,” and I believe this accurately expresses the progression. At first we participated in coaching conversations because we were supposed to do so, and then when we knew what they were supposed to look and sound like, we were able to use the structure of that interaction as a tool to help us engage in more challenging work. As I enter new coaching relationships I will honor this pattern and strive to disclose that this feeling of artificiality will pass. I won’t hesitate to put the structures of our interactions in place, but I will articulate the reasons why.

I will be more focused on student achievement data, and I will articulate this focus when working with teachers. The finding that most coaching conversations are grounded in student data was encouraging, but when I realized that the interviews reflected a higher knowledge of data specifics among coaches, it struck a little close to home. I recognize how busy teachers are, and I often try to lift any task that I can from their burden. This is intended to be helpful, but when I do this and it involves data, it can also serve to remove them from the information they need the most. I will be cautious about collecting and

analyzing data for teachers and be certain that I am collecting and analyzing data with teachers instead. My goal for future data discussions is to strive for explicit transparency, always sharing the rationale, procedures, and implications.

Repeatedly I was struck by the similarities of the experiences of the coaches and teachers in the study and my own. The fact that the coaching described by participants and the coaching I observed in the videotaped coaching sessions focused on what Yelon and Ford (1999) describe as open skills was encouraging. The fact that there were indications that the coaching had not been that way in the beginning was also familiar to me. Early in my coaching, the focus was on taking on the best practices of balanced literacy.

On the surface, these were closed skills, but once we knew how a practice was supposed to look, then we could transition to the deeper work of being flexible in our application of these strategies and approaches. Those are most definitely open skills. I return to my work with a rich appreciation for the phrase, “Fake it till you make it.” I am now better equipped to share with teachers how the nature of implementing a change progresses so that I can articulate that we are working toward open skills and autonomy, but we must begin by taking on a structure, an approach that is going to feel awkward at first. I think I could have helped some teachers more effectively navigate the changes they initially found overwhelming and imposing if I had known then what I know now.

Finally, I must address the role of *Encourager* that emerged. As a coach I have served in this role from day one, but after reviewing the findings and contemplating the importance of it, I will seek out ways to do so more often and more effectively. I used to worry about compliments sounding trite, and I sometimes saw wonderful examples of teaching and reserved my feedback for fear that it might add to the misconception that I was an

administrator or evaluator. I will still focus on being specific and sincere in my feedback, but I will not hesitate to celebrate every success.

Informal Insights

Martina described the best aspect of her coaching role as being able to learn from so many other educators:

[B]eing a learner myself, [...] the best part of this, is that I've been able to learn. [...] [N]ot everybody gets to go into fifteen different classrooms and see [...] good teaching, and so, [...] to me that's been [...] a luxury.

Her gratitude for the opportunity afforded her through coaching mirrors my own gratitude for the opportunity that conducting this study has afforded me. I appreciate the time and willingness of each co-researcher to open her heart and her practice to share the journey. As I reviewed the data, I made several informal observations that will also enlighten my own coaching and teaching.

When it comes to taking on new practices, give a scaffold. When I first became a coach, I struggled with when to give information and when to probe for deeper thinking. As I observed the coaches and considered the goals of the coaching, I could see how grateful teachers were for a concrete support to cling to as they struggled to swim in a rocky ocean of theory amid the myriad demands of daily teaching. In the past, I think I have been too concerned about the scaffold becoming a restriction, but now I can see that like vines, we all benefit from a frame on which to grow. To refer to teachers as busy is a gross understatement. Still amid the demands their profession places on them, they desire to grow and transform, and it is professionally respectful to facilitate that process by lifting any unnecessary complications. *Near transfer* before *far transfer* simply makes

good teaching sense. I need one way to complete a task and from it I can develop many ways.

I will remember Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, and I will not hesitate to be a friend. I am not a counselor. I will be careful not to act as one, and yet, considering the role of *Encourager* and the conditions necessary for learning transfer to occur reminded me that we all must have those basic needs met to engage in learning. Now more than ever I think it's critical that administrators recognize this. Otherwise the moment taken to encourage or listen to a colleague might be perceived as having been stolen from the work, rather than a measure to ensure that the safety necessary for it to continue is intact.

I will over-communicate the coaching role. When I first started coaching I, like some of the co-researchers, struggled with the words to capture it. Paradoxically, I think my definition and the definitions of my colleagues were clearer then. In part this is due to the fact that my role has evolved, but I also realize now that this was partially due to the fact that I was focusing on clearly communicating the role. So many of the challenges described by the participants and so many of the challenges that I have faced were directly related to a lack of clarity in the role definition. I will have conversations with my administrators to ensure that we agree on the definitions, and I will endeavor to clarify the role with my colleagues. I return to the coaching as a tool in the toolbox metaphor here. One must know the purpose of the tool in order to select it strategically and skillfully wield it.

Although the role of *School Leader* was not observed in the videotaped coaching sessions, it was evident in the interview analysis, and considering this role in light of the research hold strong implications for my practice. I am particularly struck by potential to

use this role to support what Romme and van Witteloostuijn (1999) describe as triple loop learning, learning that results in systemic changes that support those who interact in professional learning communities in their endeavors to continuously engage in single and double loop learning. As I have explored the findings and come to recognize my many roles as a literacy coach, I now realize that the overwhelming To Do list is common for coaches. I love serving in so many ways for so many dedicated and wonderful teachers. Considering the need for triple loop learning in terms of the sustainability of change has given me reason to pause. I must carve out the time among the myriad demands of my role to zoom out and take a look at the systemic view. I need to build in regular opportunities to engage in conversations with colleagues about the obstacles that interfere with our efforts toward growth and change. Looking back, I can think of times when we as a professional learning community have done this, but it was rather serendipitous. In light of the findings and the literature, I plan to be more proactive in this endeavor.

The voices of the participants play in my head in a stream of sound bites that inform my coaching and my teaching. My ability to articulate the role and the rationale has increased exponentially through this scholarly endeavor and the rich observational opportunities afforded me by my colleagues. I will honor their contributions by being a better advocate for coaching as a venue for teaching, learning, and professional growth.

Limitations of the Study

This qualitative study, like most, was not designed to achieve generalizability (Shank, 2002). I neither presume nor assert that the experiences explored here are typical or that the

implications I have identified for my own practice will apply to all or most literacy coaches and teachers. I have sought to deepen my understandings of the nature of coaching relationships, and in doing so I have gained significant insight into my own professional practice. I have taken and explored a few snapshots of coaching. This process has been valuable for me, and the results might hold value for other coaches, teachers, or leaders who desire to know more about the experience and nature of coaching from the perspective of those coaching and being coached.

Participants were recruited on a voluntary basis, and it is likely that the coaches and teachers who volunteer tend to be those who are willing to open their professional practice to observation. Additionally, all participants live in the Southeastern United States. The findings indicate that the relationship is a central component to the coaching work, and relationships are situated in the context of cultural norms. Furthermore, congeniality tends to be valued in this region, and participants might have been hesitant to share thoughts they were concerned might be considered impolite or negative. Several participants also expressed excitement to help the researcher complete this study, which could have played a part in shaping the information they selected to share.

Research Recommendations

Reflections on the Design

The first set of recommendations I offer addresses improvements that could be made to this study design if it were replicated. When I designed the study, I anticipated a recruitment process that would be measured in months, and instead, my recruitment process took years. If the study were to be replicated, I recommend beginning with the recruitment process that I

had approved via amendments. Rather than attempting to contact only enough systems to meet the needs of the study, use email and recruit from multiple systems simultaneously. This recommendation is not solely based on the fact that it would be more convenient to do so. It is grounded in a concern that the snapshots I collected may in fact have captured change over time in coaching rather than a moment in time. Casting a wider recruitment net would reduce the chance that this would occur again and help ensure that the snapshots collected would fall within a tighter timeframe.

My one caveat for this recommendation is that the turnaround time for transcription could prove to be daunting. Consider having transcriptions completed by an outside source, but be sure to listen to and view all raw data. The insights gained through the voice inflection, physical stance, and so forth are absolutely invaluable.

My second recommendation concerns the “member checking” component (Creswell, 1998). In my reflexive journal, I captured my developing understanding of this element of my study design.

I view member checking very differently now as well. I used to think of it as verifying transcripts. Now I wish that I could let my participants read the textural and structural descriptions. I used to think in terms of accuracy and now I think in terms of accurate representation. If I had it to do over, I would build in an opportunity for the sharing of documents that are further along in the analysis process to see what participants think of my interpretations.

I recommend three changes to improve the use of “member checking.” First, provide the textural and structural descriptions, as well as a sample of the role analysis along with the transcripts for the participants. I believe a sample of the role analysis would be sufficient to see if you are on the right track. Textural and structural descriptions are concise, but the role analysis is the full length of the transcript, and it seems too much to ask of a participant to review the transcript itself and the full analysis. Second, consider sending

the documents (marked as “Confidential”) back to the participants in advance of the follow-up interview. Several participants were uncomfortable taking the time to read while I was sitting there and the tape-recorder was running, and I believe the follow-up information would have been much richer if participants were given time to reflect on the analysis. Third, include the option to contact participants via phone or email for any future clarifications that might be needed. These recommendations are made with a note of caution. The timeline in terms for follow-up contact with participants will have to be extended even if the change is made to have someone else transcribe the interviews because it takes a substantial amount of time to analyze these components using the phenomenological method.

Future Studies

Additional research is needed to further explore the nature of coaching relationships. One of the findings of this study is that coaches have a stronger, more direct connection to the data that guides instructional decision-making and measures student achievement. One possible research question to address this issue is: *How can coaches effectively support teachers in the process of data-driven instructional practice?*

Another key finding is that the coaches have significant power in defining their roles. The research questions that this finding gives rise to include the following: *Do correlations exist among currently recognized coaching roles and increased student achievement? How might administrators select the most appropriate roles for the needs of their schools? How might administrators effectively support coaches to serve in the roles their school needs most?*

Conclusion

The findings of the study indicate that the nature of the coaching relationship is rich and complex, and it can be characterized as *Transformational Synergy*. The coaching that is taking place as evidenced by the lived experiences of the nine co-researchers in this study is largely consistent with the characteristics the literature indicates are conducive to learning transfer. The one additional role that emerged in this study, *Encourager*, is likely related to supporting such an environment. Coaches and administrators would be well advised to be purposeful in the establishment of this climate. The remaining roles that coaches are playing are for the most part consistent with the descriptions in the literature. The levels of thinking that are demonstrated during coaching are often higher order levels, and the work is predominantly supportive of far transfer, autonomy, and the development of open skills, which indicates that the structure of the work supports the development of the adult learner (Yelon & Ford, 1999). The interactions were largely *dialogic* in nature. (Freire, 2000)

In terms of supporting learning transfer, there may be room for improvement. Coaches are supporting teachers in ways that promote personal and professional growth. The area of need relates to role clarification at the building or system level. This step has potential to improve the development of new relationships by relieving some of the anxiety that emerged as characterizing the relationships in their earliest stages. It might also improve the conflict experienced when tasks that coaches are assigned do not support their coaching roles or when coaches are expected to engage in tasks that move along the supervisory continuum and are incongruent with the expectation that the coach act as a peer.

Coaches, teachers, and administrators and other stakeholders who wish to better understand the nature of literacy coach-teacher relationships might find the study useful, as

well as those who are interested in conducting additional research in this area. I hope that the findings of this study give voice to teachers and coaches. Additionally, I hope the findings offer ideas to those who wish to better support the effectiveness of coaches and teachers as they continue to engage in the important work of teaching.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Possible System Permission Form [To be removed]
Susan E. Davis
PO Box 973
Cornelia, GA 30531
706-499-7588 (c)
susanedavis@yahoo.com

[Date]

Dear [Name of Contact(s)]:

I am a doctoral student at Colorado State University, and I am studying the interactions/dialogue of literacy coaching. The Human Subjects Review Board at Colorado State University has approved the proposal for this study, the details of which are outlined in the attached documents. I am contacting you seeking permission to work with coaches and teachers within [Name of System]. The study would require that I meet with each participant (one coach and two teachers with whom he/she works) for the following: a consent form review session, an initial in-depth interview, and a follow-up interview. It would also require that the coach videotape a coaching session with each of the two participating teachers. The follow-up interview session would include a review of the transcripts. Only the videotaping of the coaching session would need to take place during school hours. There would be no cost incurred, as I will provide all needed materials, and I will travel to meet for the interview. I would need contact information for coaches and the teachers with whom they work.

The full, four-page consent form, building administrator permission form (to be used if required), contact letters for coaches and teachers, and the interview protocols are included in this packet for your review. It is important that literacy coaches and teachers not be given the interview protocol in advance of my conducting the study so that initial responses are spontaneous. Recruitment occurs in multiple systems simultaneously, and a potential participant set (one literacy coach and two teachers with whom he/she works) will be added on a first to respond basis. In the event potential participants express interest but will not be included in the study, I will contact them to let them know.

I can be contacted via the address and phone number provided above should you have any additional questions. I have included a self-addressed stamped envelope for your convenience. Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration.

Yours truly,

Susan E. Davis

I hereby grant permission for Susan E. Davis to conduct the study entitled *The Nature of the Literacy Coaching Experience: Exploring Teacher-Coach Relationships in Elementary Education* in [Name of System].

Signature

Date

Title

Appendix B

Building Level Permission Form [Form to be used if required; Line to be removed]

Susan E. Davis
PO Box 973
Cornelia, GA 30531
706-499-7588 (c)
susanedavis@yahoo.com

[Date]

Dear [Name of Administrator]:

I am a doctoral student at Colorado State University, and I am studying the interactions/dialogue of literacy coaching. The Human Subjects Review Board at Colorado State University has approved the proposal for this study, the details of which are outlined in the attached documents. Additionally, [Name of System] has granted permission for me to conduct the study. I am contacting you seeking permission to work with the literacy coaches and teachers within [Name of School]. The study would require that I meet with each participant (one coach and two teachers with whom he/she works) for the following: a consent form review session, an initial in-depth interview, and a follow-up interview. It would also require that the coach videotape a coaching session with each of the two participating teachers. The follow-up interview session would include a review of the transcripts. Only the videotaping of the coaching session would need to take place during school hours. There would be no cost incurred, as I will provide all needed materials, and I will travel to meet for the interview.

The full, four-page consent form and contact letters for coaches and teachers are included in this packet for your review. Recruitment occurs in multiple systems simultaneously, and a potential participant set (one literacy coach and two teachers with whom he/she works) will be added on a first to respond basis. In the event potential participants express interest but will not be included in the study, I will contact them to let them know. I can be contacted via the address and phone number provided above should you have any additional questions. I have included a self-addressed stamped envelope for your convenience. Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration.

Yours truly,

Susan E. Davis

I hereby grant permission for Susan E. Davis to conduct the study entitled *The Nature of the Literacy Coaching Experience: Exploring Teacher-Coach Relationships in Elementary Education* with coaches and teachers from [Name of School].

Signature

Date

Title

Appendix C
Letter to Coaches [To be removed]
Susan E. Davis
PO Box 973
Cornelia, GA 30531
706-499-7588 (c)
susanedavis@yahoo.com

[Date]

Dear [Name of Coach]:

I am a doctoral student at Colorado State University, and I am studying the interactions/dialogue of literacy coaching. The Human Subjects Review Board at Colorado State University has approved the proposal for this study, and [Name of System] has granted permission for me to conduct the study within the system. I am contacting you due to your role as an elementary literacy coach. If you agree to participate, I would need a list of the teachers with whom you work so that I might contact them. I would need to find two teachers with whom you work who would also be willing to participate. The study would require the following: that we meet to review the consent form and plan the video-taping of a coaching session, that you videotape a coaching session with each of the two teachers with whom you work that agree to participate, that we meet for an initial interview, and that we meet for a follow-up interview which will include a transcript review. There would be no cost incurred, as I will provide all needed materials, and I will travel to meet for the interview.

I have enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope for your response. If you would prefer to respond via email or phone, my contact information is included above. Potential participants will be added to the study in sets (one literacy coach and two teachers with whom he/she works) on a first to respond basis. In the event that you express interest but will not be included in the study, I will contact you to let you know. Please feel free to contact me for additional details. Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration.

Yours truly,

Susan E. Davis

(Name of Literacy Coach / Name of System)

Yes, I am willing to participate. Let's meet to review the details.
(Please list phone number and a convenient time to call.)

I would like to know more before I decide. (Please list a convenient time and contact information)

No, I do not wish to participate.

Appendix D
Letter to Teachers [To be removed]

Susan E. Davis
PO Box 973
Cornelia, GA 30531
706-499-7588 (c)
susanedavis@yahoo.com

[Date]

Dear [Name of Teacher]:

I am a doctoral student at Colorado State University, and I am studying the interactions/dialogue of literacy coaching. The Human Subjects Review Board at Colorado State University has approved the proposal for this study, and [Name of System] has granted permission for me to conduct the study within the system. I am contacting you due to your role as an elementary literacy teacher who works with a literacy coach. The study would require the following: that we meet to review the consent form, that you allow the coach to videotape a coaching session, that we meet for an initial interview, and that we meet for a follow-up interview which will include a transcript review. There would be no cost incurred, as I will provide all needed materials, and I will travel to meet for the interview.

I have enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope for your response. If you would prefer to respond via email or phone, my contact information is included above. Potential participants will be added to the study in sets (one literacy coach and two teachers with whom he/she works) on a first to respond basis. In the event that you express interest but will not be included in the study, I will contact you to let you know. Please feel free to contact me for additional details. Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration.

Yours truly,

Susan E. Davis

(Name of Teacher / Name of System)

Yes, I am willing to participate. Let's meet to review the details.
(Please list phone number and a convenient time to call.)

I would like to know more before I decide. (Please list phone number and a convenient time to call.)

No, I do not wish to participate.

Appendix E

In-depth Interview Protocol (Coaches)

This interview is part of my doctoral work exploring literacy coaching relationships in elementary education. As the consent form that you have signed indicates, this interview will be tape-recorded. The source of all information will remain confidential and you will have an opportunity to review the transcript for accuracy. If at any time you do not wish to respond, you are not required to do so and may decline to answer. If you need to stop the interview for any reason, please let me know. Do you have any questions before we begin?

- 1) Please begin by describing your background in education and in literacy coaching specifically.
 - a. How did you come to serve in this role?
 - b. Was training provided?
 - c. If so, please describe the training that you received.
- 2) Now, please describe your role as the literacy coach as fully and completely as you can. Anything that you consider relevant or interesting is important to include.
- 3) I would like to know more about your current coaching experiences. How would you describe a typical coaching session?
 - a. How does a typical coaching session now compare to a typical coaching session during your first year coaching at this school?
- 4) What feelings do you associate with coaching sessions?
 - a. How do your feelings during a typical coaching session now compare to your feelings during your first year as a coach at this school?
- 5) As a literacy coach, how would you describe your relationships with the teachers you coach?
 - a. What has been the nature of those coaching relationships over time?
 - b. What insights have teachers shared with you concerning their perceptions of the coaching relationship?
 - c. What concrete comparisons could you make to help people understand the relationship between a literacy coach and teacher?
- 6) What do you consider the best aspects of the current coaching relationships?
 - a. If you could alter the coaching relationships, what, if anything, would you change?

Appendix E, cont'd

- 7) When others ask you what coaching is like, how do you typically respond?
 - a. What are the most typical misconceptions that you have noted in the understandings of others?
 - b. Please describe any responses to your explanations that are noteworthy.
- 8) What else do you think is important to share about coaching relationships?
- 9) Has coaching impacted student achievement? If so, in what ways?
- 10) "What question did I not ask that I should have?
(paraphrased from Patton, p. 379)

Appendix F

In-depth Interview Protocol (Teachers)

This interview is part of my doctoral work exploring literacy coaching relationships in elementary education. As the consent form that you have signed indicates, this interview will be tape-recorded. The source of all information will remain confidential and you will have an opportunity to review the transcript for accuracy. If at any time you do not wish to respond, you are not required to do so and may decline to answer. If you need to stop the interview for any reason, please let me know. Do you have any questions before we begin?

- 1) Please begin by describing your background in education.
 - a. What is your current role?
 - b. Were you involved in any literacy coaching prior to your experiences here?
- 2) Now, please describe your perception of the literacy coach's role in his/her work with you as fully and completely as you can. Anything that you consider relevant or interesting is important to include.
- 3) I would like to know more about your current coaching experiences. How would you describe a typical coaching session?
 - a. How does a typical coaching session now compare to a typical coaching session during the first year you were coached at this school?
- 4) What feelings do you associate with coaching sessions?
 - a. How do your feelings about a typical coaching session now compare to your feelings during your first year being coached at this school?
- 5) How would you describe your relationship with the literacy coach?
 - a. What concrete comparisons could you make to help people understand the relationship between a teacher and a literacy coach?
 - b. What has been the nature of that coaching relationship over time?
- 6) What do you consider the best aspects of the current coaching relationship?
 - a. If you could alter the coaching relationship, what, if anything, would you change?
- 7) When others ask you what coaching is like, how do you typically respond?
 - a. What concrete comparison could you make to help people understand the experience of being coached?
 - b. What are the most typical misconceptions that you have noted in the understandings of others?
 - c. Please describe any atypical responses that are noteworthy.

Appendix F, cont'd

- 8) Has coaching impacted student achievement? If so, in what ways?
- 9) What else do you think is important to share about coaching relationships?
- 10) What question did I not ask that I should have?
(paraphrased from Patton, 2002, p. 379)

Appendix G
Follow-up Interview Protocol (All Participants)

This follow-up interview is part of my doctoral work exploring literacy coaching relationships in elementary education. As the consent form that you signed indicates, this interview will also be tape-recorded. The source of all information will remain confidential. If at any time you do not wish to respond, you are not required to do so and may decline to answer. If you need to stop the interview for any reason, please let me know. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1) I have a copy of the transcript from our initial interview session. Please take a moment to read and review the transcript. Feel free to ask any questions that you may have concerning the way the transcript is written. It is important to clarify any meanings that you feel might be unclear or misunderstood. Do you have any clarifications or corrections to note? Is the transcription accurate? What pseudonym would prefer to be assigned? (*If the pseudonym has already been selected, request a second choice.*)

2) As you have reflected on our conversation, do you have any additional thoughts about the nature of coaching relationships? Anything that you consider interesting or noteworthy is important to share.

3) Is there anything that you think it is important for stakeholders (colleagues, administrators, parents, legislators, etc.) to know about coaching relationships that has not been revealed during this interview process?

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY:

The Nature of the Literacy Coaching Experience: Exploring Teacher-Coach Relationships in Elementary Education

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

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WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

This research focuses on elementary literacy coaches and the teachers with whom they work. You have been selected because you serve as a literacy coach (although you may hold a different title) or you are a teacher who works with someone who serves as a literacy coach.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

The Co-PI, Susan E. Davis, is conducting the study under the guidance of Dr. Timpson. This study does not receive outside financial support.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

I will be taking a look at the conversations between elementary literacy coaches and teachers and interviewing the participants to explore the nature of coaching relationships in elementary schools. I hope to gain insight into the nature of the coaching relationship through the perceptions and interactions of coaches and teachers.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

An initial interview lasting about 30-60 minutes will be conducted with each literacy coach and with each of two teachers with whom he/she works. One coaching session between the literacy coach and each of two teachers with whom he/she works will be videotaped on site in each of four schools. A follow-up interview lasting about 30 minutes will be conducted with each participant following the transcription of the initial interview and the videotaped coaching session. Both interviews will be conducted at a site selected by the participant (the school, his/her home, a neutral site such as a local library, etc.). I will be working with four schools and expect the fieldwork phase of the study to take about four months. I expect the analysis and write up will take approximately four to five months.

Page 1 of 4 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

Appendix H, cont'd

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

- Elementary literacy coaches will be asked to videotape a session with two of the teachers with whom they work (the researcher will provide all necessary materials)
- Teachers will be asked to allow the videotaping of a session
- Each participant will be asked to participate in an initial interview session at the site he/she chooses for approximately 30-60 minutes
- Each participant will be asked to participate in a follow-up interview session at the site he/she chooses for 30-60 minutes to review and verify the accuracy of transcripts and share any additional thoughts

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you do not expect to complete your teaching/coaching assignment this school year due to illness, maternity leave, or a change in assignment, you should not take part in this study.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

- There are no known risks in these procedures.
- Some people may find it uncomfortable to reflect openly and honestly on their teaching, learning, and relationships.
- Some people might be concerned about confidentiality when sharing sensitive information.
- It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known, potential, or unknown risks.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are no benefits from taking part in this study. My hope for the study is to add to the body of knowledge concerning coaching perceptions and interactions as they are actually occurring in the field. This perspective has not often been shared before, and I would like to see the voices of the coaches and teachers included in the literature.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE? The only cost to participate will be the time required for the interviews. Consumable materials needed for videotaping will be provided.

Page 2 of 4 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

Appendix H, cont'd

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE? I will share all data with the principal investigator, and we will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When I write about the study to share it with other researchers, I will write about the combined information I have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. A self-selected pseudonym will be assigned to you, and the school where you work will not be identified. I may publish the results of this study; however, I will keep you name and other identifying information private.

I will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. For example, your name will be kept separate from your research records and these two things will be stored under lock and key. Once all participants have reviewed transcripts for accuracy, the list that links names with transcripts will be destroyed, and transcripts will be identified by code. You will be assigned a self-selected pseudonym. You should know, however, that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court [For example: to tell authorities if we believe that you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.].

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY? If you fail to participate in the coaching session or to attend either one of the interview sessions you may be removed from the study. If the colleagues from your school fail/decline to participate in the study, you may be removed from the study, as well. If you decline to participate at any point during the study, you will be removed.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? No compensation will be provided for participating in this study.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU ARE INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH? The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the co-investigator, Susan E. Davis at susanedavis@yahoo.com. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, IRB Senior Administrator at 970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you. This consent form has been approved by the CSU Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects on February 15, 2011.

Page 3 of 4 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

Appendix H, cont'd

WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

It is very important that every phase of the research be completed. If you have any reason to doubt that you will be able to be available for the initial interview, the videotaping, or the follow-up interview please do not hesitate to decline to participate. Thank you for your time and careful consideration whether or not you choose to participate in the study.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 4 pages.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Name of person providing information to participant

Date

Signature of Research Staff

Page 4 of 4 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

Appendix I

Sample of Individual Textural Description – Excerpt from (Carol)

Carol also schedules a time to observe teachers in a more formal way once a year. This takes place after “they’ve already observed each other” in the area of focus for the year. She uses an instrument that she created and modifies as necessary, to record information to guide her feedback. After the observation, Carol has a conversation with the teacher, and “we can talk about [...] what I saw, and what I didn’t see.” Often teachers will “just talk to me about how they felt it went,” and “they’ll bring up things that I don’t even have to say.” Most of the time coaching is “very informal.” Teachers “just come in, and we talk.” Some teachers come in to make an appointment, and “we’ll just talk.” She believes dialog is important because she wants the feedback process to be initiated by teachers. “I’m trying to give them constructive feedback.”

Carol considers her role difficult to describe, but she attempts to inform parents that she works with teachers and students “doing professional development [...] usually in the classroom [...] job-embedded I guess you could say [...] on best practices in literacy.” She doesn’t “know if people understand that [*shared laughter*] or not,” but it somewhat captures the idea.

Carol credits time together as one of the reasons for the improvement in relationships. “I think this has been the best year because I have been here for four years.” She considers herself approachable, “they know they can come in anytime they want something.” She believes teachers see her as someone who’s had training they have not had. Though she doesn’t believe they see her as an expert, she does believe “they trust me to show them how to do it.” She considers herself responsible for delivering

Appendix J
 Sample of Role Analysis - Excerpt from (Martina and Susie)

	Possible Claims	Role(s)/Bloom's Level
<p>Martina Brown: <i>[clears throat]</i> She [...] talks a lot about, now I love this one so simple <i>[clears throat]</i>, she [...] has some topics in here <i>[flipping through text as teacher looks on]</i> about line breaks and things like that...see if I can find that really quick. Sharing [...] it's [...] more ideas...</p>		Classroom Supporter / Resource Provider / Evaluate: Critiquing 5.2
<p>Susie Dean: Mmmm...I need to pull this book back out again.</p>	There were some great ideas in here.	
<p>Martina Brown: Uh-hum <i>[still flipping through text]</i>. This is all about...okay, these are like the minilessons, like topics, short poems, line-breaks, and white space.</p>	affirmation	Classroom Supporter / Resource Provider / Understand: Summarizing 2.4 - the content of the book
<p>Susie Dean: Ah...yes.</p>	affirmation	
<p>Martina Brown: So this, <i>[pointing to text]</i> [...] right here would be a good place to go for a lesson if you want to just show them [...] how to do that, and then, ending lines and repetition.</p>	This book would provide lessons that align with your purpose/goal.	Classroom Supporter / Evaluate: Critiquing 5.2
<p>Susie Dean: Yes <i>[pointing, nodding affirmatively, and smiling]</i>.</p>	affirmation	
<p>Martina Brown: You know, we did a little bit of that, I think.</p>		Classroom Supporter / Remember: Recalling 1.2
<p>Susie Dean: Yes, we did, I remember that.</p>	affirmation	Teacher is (Remember: Recalling 1.2)
<p>Martina Brown: [...] [H]ow some poems begin with a line and end with the same line, you know, those repeating lines or may repeat every so many lines.</p>		Classroom Supporter / Understand: Exemplifying 2.2
<p>Susie Dean: Okay.</p>	affirmation	
<p>Martina Brown: So it sounds like you're really looking at the structure of poetry and you want [...] your kids, just to be more well-versed in that.</p>		Classroom Supporter / Understand: Interpreting 2.1 - paraphrasing and clarifying
<p>Susie Dean: Definitely.</p>	affirmation	

Appendix K
 Sample of Levels of Thinking Comparison (Color Coding Removed for Printing Purposes)

The Teacher (D1)	After the Coach	The Teacher (D2)	After the Coach
The teacher is (Create: Planning 6.2) - based on the data	Data Coach / Evaluate: Critiquing 5.2	The teacher is (Create: Planning 6.2)	Instructional Specialist / Understand: Interpreting 2.1 - clarifying
The teacher is (Analyze: Differentiating 4.1) what is her most important work with the coach	Instructional Specialist / Understand: Exemplifying 2.2 - illustrating how to implement the strategy	The teacher is (Evaluate: Critiquing 5.2)	Learning Facilitator / Understand: Exemplifying 2.2
The teacher is (Create: Generating 6.1) - a possible teaching strategy to address the need identified	Instructional Specialist / Understand: Interpreting 2.1 - clarifying - prompting the teacher to Create: Planning 6.2	The teacher is (Evaluate: Critiquing 5.2)	Learning Facilitator / Resource Provider / Understand: Exemplifying 2.2
The teacher is (Evaluate: Critiquing 5.2) her own performance	Instructional Specialist / Understand: Interpreting 2.1 - clarifying	The teacher is (Create: Planning 6.2) - for instruction and for her own growth - requesting Classroom Supporter	Instructional Specialist / Understand: Summarizing 2.4 - prompting teacher for Create: Planning 6.2
The teacher is (Create: Planning 6.2) planning for the next steps based on the conclusions she is drawing from the information the coach shared	Instructional Specialist / Learning Facilitator / Encourager / Understand: Explaining 2.7		
The teacher is (Analyze: Differentiating 4.1) - how what she doing is like guided reading	Instructional Specialist / Understand: Exemplifying 2.2 - illustrating		
The teacher is (Create: Generating 6.1) a list of other instructional options that she could use	Instructional Specialist / Create: Generating 6.1 - creating a hypothesis about the best approach for the teacher's observations		