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Inside Collaborative Communities: Teachers' Perceptions of the Collaborative Process

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Inside Collaborative Communities: Teachers' Perceptions of the Collaborative Process

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all teachers who believe in the importance of collaboration with their colleagues and who choose to collaborate with each other to reach common goals. Such teachers know that "collaboration is a powerful source of professional learning, of getting better at the job. In collaborative organizations, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" (Hargreaves, 1994, pp. 246-247).

This dissertation is also dedicated to the memory of Gary Stuart Higgins. After Gary retired from the US Army Special Forces, he became involved in the health and future of children and worked closely with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. Every Thanksgiving, Gary would ask me many questions about my experiences and opinions as an elementary school teacher. He always gave me an important voice and encouraged me in my research. He is greatly missed.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand teachers' perceptions of the collaborative process and how it affected their classroom practices. The research question was "What are the perceptions held by experienced public elementary-school teachers in a large urban school district in the southeastern United States regarding the collaborative process in their school settings?"

The research design used semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a specific group of public elementary-school teachers who had extensive professional development and experience with the collaborative process, either in co-teaching settings or in frequent collaboration with colleagues. Using the process of educational criticism (Eisner, 1998) and Hatch's (2002) typological analysis, interview data were analyzed. Eisner's description and interpretation using educational criticism involved six typologies: (a) multiple views of collaboration, (b) the roles of principals in teacher collaboration, (c) elements necessary for successful collaboration, (d) benefits of collaboration, (e) challenges of collaboration, and (f) the role of collaboration in the development of teachers' personal and professional identity.

The evaluation dimension of Eisner's educational criticism focused on three categories based on data from the present study: how teacher collaboration promoted teacher leadership; how teacher collaboration developed teacher identity, and how teacher collaboration influenced student learning. Growth in teacher leadership, and development of teacher identity and student learning were characteristics associated with a strong educational and collaborative environment.

Analysis of the data in the present study led to the development of five themes: (a) Teacher collaboration is a complicated process that must be learned; (b) Teacher buy-in leads to

successful collaboration with colleagues; (c) Teacher collaboration thrives in a collaborative culture and contributes to the development of such a culture; (d) Teachers need to have certain characteristics to collaborate successfully; and, (e) Collaboration can develop and strengthen teacher identity, improve teaching practices, and increase student learning.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Teaching in today's public schools is not for the fainthearted. Teachers and their students must endure intense pressure from the dictates of federal, state, and district policies. Teachers often feel inadequate in meeting the district demands for content coverage and in having all students meet a myriad of performance standards as measured by the annual standards-based testing which significantly influences student promotion. Teachers frequently worry about being ineffective in their classroom instruction for fear of causing failure for their students, their colleagues, and their schools. Many teachers experience additional guilt for sacrificing time for child-oriented activities within their daily routines in order to cover the broad spectrum of standards and their many elements. Language barriers, ability levels, and behavior management issues are ever-broadening, daily challenges for teachers. Furthermore, time for necessary review and remediation for struggling students is tightly restricted due to fast-paced learning schedules that teachers must follow.

Teachers continually struggle to find a balance between their own views on teaching practices and the constraints of state and district demands (Fried, 2001). One way for teachers to manage the educational system's pressures, demands, and fears is to connect with others through collaboration. Fortunately, many teachers are discovering that collaboration with colleagues, administrators, and others on how to improve their classroom practices is one of the most powerful, effective, and rewarding strategies for success available to them (Bush, 2003; Cozart, Cudahy, ndunda, & VanSickle, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Friend, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2017; Johnson, 2003; Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006; Lieberman & Miller, 1999; Murphy, J., 2005; Schrage, 1995).

Because teachers need support for the difficult work and often overwhelming challenges taking place inside schools, collaboration with colleagues, as well as with teachers from other schools, enables them to make necessary connections to outside knowledge (Lieberman & Miller, 1999). By collaborating with other teachers in various school settings, either through workshops, seminars, or the Internet, teachers can receive support, not only in coping with the demands of the educational system, but also in their professional learning. By developing connections with others, teachers can explore possibilities and exchange ideas, insights, and experiences with each other.

Although many teachers prefer the privacy, noninterference, and sense of autonomy that teaching in isolation can provide, they can sometimes develop feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, competition, and discouragement by working alone in isolation rather than in collaboration with colleagues (Little, 1990a; Short & Greer, 2002). Their individualistic conceptions of practice can cause them to struggle with the burden of failure and to doubt their personal efficacy and the value of the services they offer (Lortie, 1975).

However, collaboration comes with costs to teachers: the cost of the additional time required of them and the risk of exposure to criticism and conflict (Johnson, 2003; Little, 1990a). Conversely, the profession itself pays a price when teachers prefer teaching in isolation and avoiding social interaction and collaboration with colleagues. Because they cannot or will not exchange help and feedback with their peers, their valuable creativity, commitment, and energy that only they could contribute to their school organization are lost, as well as any possibility of colleagues' praise and recognition (Little, 1990a; Short & Greer, 2002). Thus, the traditional

habits of teaching and planning in isolation behind closed doors have become outdated in today's educational system.

In spite of many potential problems and pitfalls, some of which are discussed further in Chapter Two, teacher collaboration has the potential to be one of the richest opportunities for teachers to experience greater professional development and personal satisfaction than they ever expected (Clandinin, Davies, Hogan, & Kennard, 1993; Friend, 2000; Johnson, 2003; Koehler & Baxter, 1997; Lieberman & Miller, 1999; Little, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2004). Indeed, the concept of teaching itself has recently been defined as "a *collaborative activity* [italics in original] conducted within a *professional community* [italics in original] that feeds ongoing teacher learning, problem solving, and the development of ever more sophisticated practice" (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 83). Thus, the process of collaboration has the potential to empower teachers as they face the many pressures and demands of teaching and to provide professional growth and personal fulfillment for themselves. Furthermore, teachers in schools with a collaborative culture enjoy greater leadership capacity, intellectual stimulation, and job satisfaction, as well as higher levels of trust and respect as professionals than teachers in other environments (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

In addition to collaboration having the potential to empower teachers and to enhance their teaching experience, it is increasingly apparent in the literature of the field that teacher collaboration can also have a positive influence on school improvement. "Collaboration as a whole has a record of indirect, long term, yet clear and positive effects on teachers and students" (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2017, p. 74). Schools in which teachers are able to collaborate successfully experience noticeable improvements in the overall quality of students' academic

performance as well as in teachers' practice (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Hargreaves & Boyle, 2015; Hill & Guthrie, 1999; Little, 2003; Murphy, 2005). In fact, having teachers working together in a collaborative culture is becoming widely known as a "best practice, the best hope for helping all students learn" (DuFour, 2003, p. 72).

The best practice of teachers collaborating together reflects the established practice of regular education teachers collaborating with exceptional student education (ESE) teachers. From early mandates to provide students with disabilities access to appropriate educational opportunities in regular classrooms to more recent federal mandates, such as the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, the level of inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular classroom setting has occurred through the support of ESE teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016). Therefore, teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities now provide professional development focused on collaboration and collegial team learning practices (Casey, 2019). The goal is to provide the professional development that "special and general education teachers need in order to ensure a sustainable inclusion model and hone teachers' skills over time" (p. 2). Before federal and state mandates were established, "few education preparation programs provided both special education and general education majors with instruction in interpersonal communication skills and collaboration strategies" (Hudson & Glomb, 1997, p. 442). Indeed, mandating the instruction of collaborative models, skills, and strategies in teacher preparation programs has been a step in the right direction.

Even though collaboration can contribute to teacher and student growth and school improvement, certain challenges are inherent in the process. The ability to work with other professionals to reach goals while preserving good relationships is a skill which most adults have

not mastered (Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Collaborating with others requires that teachers have a strong commitment to both their working relationships and their goals. Teachers must draw on their own experience, creativity, and problem-solving abilities in order to collaborate successfully with each other without sacrificing their relationships or their collective goals. Thus, acquiring new, effective collaborative skills "is desirable, necessary, and legitimate" (Elmore, 2006, p. 60) for those in education. Furthermore, as teachers become aware of the professional benefits of collaboration, along with its effectiveness in achieving higher levels of learning for students, teachers are obligated to become familiar with the process of collaboration and apply its practice in their own teaching (DuFour, 2003). However, the process of collaboration itself is complex and can be difficult to put into practice (Achinstein, 2002; Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010; Johnson, 2003). Therefore, gaining a better understanding of the process and practice of successful collaboration could be advantageous for many educators and their schools.

Schrage (1995) described collaboration as a powerful, empowering aspect of human relationships in which people could learn about the unknown together. Schrage added that, through collaboration, two or more teachers with complementary skills can interact "to create a shared understanding that none had previously possessed or could have come to on their own" (Schrage, 1990, p. 40). By working together, sharing and enhancing each other's best practices, and even creating new and better practices, teachers can learn more about themselves, their own professional identities, and each other, both personally and professionally, than they could ever learn while isolated behind closed classroom doors.

The central players in teachers' collaborations are the teachers themselves, for they are the ones who apply the relevant knowledge of the elements of successful collaboration. However, the review of the literature discussed in Chapter Two indicated that the professional literature on teacher collaboration has focused primarily on the need for teacher collaboration, the benefits of such collaboration, and the skills required for teachers to collaborate successfully. Less attention has been paid to how teachers themselves view the process and the knowledge they have or need to acquire regarding the complicated process of collaboration. Gaining a better understanding of the collaborative process and the claims regarding its benefits in the field of education necessitates explorations into teachers' perceptions, views, understandings, and interpretations of their collaborative experiences (Little, 2003). Examining and documenting teachers' experiences in the process of collaboration, how they think, and the "specific interactions and dynamics" (p. 917) of what they do, could both reveal how these experiences have affected their own classroom practices and student learning and inform the profession of what constitutes successful teacher collaboration in schools.

Giving teachers an opportunity to articulate and expand upon their own "personal practical knowledge" (Clandinin et al., 1993, p. 1) of their experiences may offer insight into the inner workings and effects of collaboration in the educational setting. Teachers "know things" that researchers and policymakers can never know, and they wonder, "If you'd only ask" (Lightfoot, 1989). Such knowledge can inform collaborative practice in schools.

The intent of the present study was to learn how teachers perceived their own knowledge regarding collaborative skills, what they are, what they look like, and how to develop them. An on-the-ground view of what teachers have experienced could allow the building of rich, in-depth

descriptions of the complex circumstances that require further exploration (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) and could provide this knowledge to others in the field of education. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to address teachers' perceptions regarding their participation in collaboration.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the present study was both exploratory and descriptive (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). As an exploratory study, it investigated the collaborative process in terms of the actions, events, beliefs, attitudes, social structures, and processes occurring in teacher collaborations as perceived by the teachers themselves. Through the use of qualitative, semi-structured, in-depth interviewing, the present study provided a means for teachers to share their insights and understandings of the collaborative process from their own points of view (Merriam, 1998). The present study was also descriptive because the participants were able to provide specific descriptions of their experiences in collaboration. Such descriptions can provide opportunities for other educators to engage vicariously with the collaborative process and apply what they may learn to their own teaching practices (Eisner, 1995). The primary aim in conducting this study was to advance understanding of the collaborative process and its potential to benefit educators and their students from the vantage point of those key players in collaboration, the teachers themselves.

More specifically, the purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how one group of elementary teachers in one particular public-school district perceived their experiences of working collaboratively with fellow teachers in their schools. Of interest, as well, is a deeper understanding of how the collaborative experience affected these teachers in their

professional practice and how they perceived teacher collaboration having an impact on student learning.

The process of collaboration that is now expected among teachers, administrators, staff, consultants, parents, and students within the public-school system can be an extremely challenging experience. The present study can connect the reader vicariously with collaborating teachers to gain a better understanding of the collaborative process and thus may provide help to improve the experiences of other teachers who are navigating their way through the tricky waters of collaboration.

Research Question and Research Design

The main focus of this study was teachers' perceptions of the collaborative process. More specifically, the research question itself was: What are the perceptions held by experienced public elementary-school teachers in a large urban school district in the southeastern United States regarding the collaborative process in their school settings? Such a question reflects the need for qualitative research to allow the flexibility to permit exploration, but enough focus to delimit the study (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Semi-structured, in-depth interviewing as a research design (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Patton, 2002) allowed for the examination of teachers' views into how their collaborative experiences had affected them in their professional lives. In Patton's (2002) clear terms, to know what people think, ask them. The use of follow-up interview questions regarding the ways collaboration with colleagues influenced classroom practices and how the collaborative process influenced teachers' abilities to cope with the uncertainty of continual changes in education enhanced the data-collection process.

Theoretical Framework

       Earlier discussion in this chapter provided a basis for the theoretical framework that guided the present study. Figure 1 offers a visual representation of the theoretical strands in the literature which served as the foundation that guided the present study.

       Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Framework

Teacher knowledge	Collaboration	Teacher knowledge and collaboration lead to school improvement.
(Clandinin, Davies, Hogan, & Kennard, 1993; Hargreaves, 2003; Lightfoot, 1989; Little, 2003; Murphy, 2005)	(Barth, 2006; Bellah, 1989; Cook & Friend, 2017; Johnson, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2004)	(Darling-Hammond, 2008; Fullan, 2016; Gable, Mostert, & Tonelson, 2004; Hargreaves, 1994; Sahlberg, 2015)

Three theoretical strands from the literature contributed to the theoretical framework. One strand reflects the emphasis in the literature that school-improvement efforts must include teacher knowledge in developing programs and practices. Such effort should recognize the importance of teachers' personal, practical, and professional knowledge about developing practices to increase student learning and in implementing them.

Secondly, the framework includes reference to the complexity of collaboration efforts in education. Such complexity must be recognized as part of efforts to support teacher collaboration, for example, through in-depth professional development and by providing support for collaboration, such as time and space allocated to collaboration.

A third theoretical strand argues that teacher knowledge regarding their world of practice must be included in efforts to improve education, both out of respect for the work of teachers and, more importantly, in recognition of the value of the knowledge only teachers have that can contribute to the success, not only of collaboration but also of school-improvement efforts.

Defining Collaboration

Collaboration occurs in many different formats, models, and settings. Clearly defining and elaborating upon the specific model of teacher collaboration for the purpose of the present study can help the reader understand its focus. Explanations of additional terms used within this proposal will follow the discussion of collaboration to clarify their meanings relevant to concepts used throughout this study.

Collaboration has been described as "good for some, not so good for others" (Johnson, 2003, p. 337). Learning which aspect of collaboration is more dominant, whether it is good or not so good in the minds of public-school teachers, and why it is so could inform and prepare

educators and administrators on how to successfully navigate the tricky waters of the collaborative process. If district policy-makers simply dictate required collaboration among teachers and administration, or administrators initiate "contrived collegiality" (Sergiovanni, 2004, p. 51) with a set of formal procedures to increase joint teacher planning, then the collaborative process could become yet another "awkward social ritual that organizations put their people through" (Schrage, 1995, p. ix), or just another bandwagon on which to jump until the next new idea comes along.

The following definition and description of collaboration framed the focus of the present study. Collaboration within an educational setting can be defined as "goal-oriented talk, discourse, conversation, and communication, in this case, between two or more educators" (Bush, 2003, p. 2). In this process of collaboration, teachers engage in frequent conversations with colleagues by sharing their ideas, problems, and successes in their teaching practices, by giving and accepting each other's advice, and, occasionally, by observing each other to give helpful critiques of their teaching (Little, 2003). These processes are effective ways for educators to learn and develop as professionals by having conversations with other colleagues who share common goals for their students. As a result, collaborating teachers can also plan, prepare, and evaluate teaching materials, assessments, and can use data to improve instructional effectiveness. The overriding goal of teacher collaboration, thus, is a rewarding combination of school improvement and professional growth and support (DuFour, 2003; Smith & Scott, 1990).

Related Terms

The literature defines and describes collaboration among teachers using several related terms that are often perceived as synonymous with each other. However, collaboration was the

focus for the present study because it addresses a process that takes place within various groups of teachers and occurs within various forms of collaborative models.

Professional communities are groups of teachers who "share understandings about the nature of good teaching and work together to enact them" (Schoenfeld, 2008, p. 147). These professional communities not only provide settings that are conducive for teachers who are learning to teach but also enhance the effectiveness of teachers' professional development as they continue to learn, with colleagues, to use better teaching strategies.

The concepts of the professional learning community, or collaborative community, are very similar to the concept of the professional community described by Schoenfeld (2008). All three terms are sometimes used interchangeably. However, Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) described the professional learning community in more detail by identifying it as the new paradigm for teacher learning. In professional learning communities, teachers work intensively together over a sustained period of time engaging in "continual dialogue to examine their practice and student performance and to develop and implement more effective instructional practices" (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009, p. 49). Teachers who are members of professional learning communities are seeing improvements in their students' learning. These improvements are taking place because these teachers have the opportunity to develop new practices together, to try them out, to examine their results, and to reflect upon their practices with colleagues. In this process, the teachers can take the successes and problems occurring in their classrooms and share them with colleagues in order to develop further their professional practice. By working together in professional learning communities, or collaborative

communities, teachers can expand their understanding of curriculum content, of how students can best learn that content, and of how to teach it to their students more effectively.

Co-teaching is a model of teaching in which there are "two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse or blended group of students in a single physical space" (Cook & Friend, 2017, p. 2). Frequent and intensive collaboration is likely to occur in such a setting where two or more teachers provide instruction to the same group of students in the same classroom each day.

An additional term with relevance to the present study is personal practical knowledge (Clandinin et al., 1993). For teachers, personal practical knowledge is the "experiential knowledge that was embodied in us as persons and was enacted in our classroom practice and in our lives" (p. 1). This knowledge is developed over time within particular contexts and as a result of reflection (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Given the focus of the present study on teachers' perceptions of the collaborative process as they have experienced it professionally, the role of their personal practical knowledge becomes important. Therefore, exploring teachers' perceptions of the collaborative process involves their sharing their personal practical knowledge.

To summarize, the argument supporting this study assumed that teacher collaboration can build the capacity of teachers and make schools more effective places for students to learn. In an interview conducted by Sergiovanni (2004), one veteran teacher expressed her feelings and those of her colleagues toward collaboration in such a descriptive manner that it is worth quoting at length:

The team approach is successful because teachers feel we are given the

opportunity to meet productively, not be robotically brought together for some

forced reason. Teachers work comfortably together because we are empowered to

generate goals from within our own ranks. . . . The collaborative configuration

encourages both individual and collective dialogue and reflection. Teachers share best

practices, successful approaches, failures (which sometimes teach more than successes),

and new ideas. We feel that our voices are regularly solicited, considered, and valued by

our colleagues. No wonder we buy into collaboration. (p. 52)

Teachers who experience successful collaboration within professional learning communities

similar to the one described above can benefit in many ways, along with their students and

possibly their entire schools benefitting (Little, 1990b). The day-to-day work of teaching has

greater coherence and integration of subject matter, and schools can become environments for

learning to teach because of the valuable support teachers provide for each other. In such school

environments, teachers and students can experience steady growth. The potential for such

lasting good for teachers, students, and schools in the collaborative process is too great for those

in the field of education to assume, as they have in other situations with other innovations, that

"'this too will pass'" (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 22).

On a broader scale, teacher collaboration can have an effect district-wide. Occasionally,

districts introduce new and hopefully improved curricula, policies, or methodologies into public

schools. However, teachers have demonstrated for many years that they are not passive

recipients of these expert-developed educational products and "externally-prescribed policies"

(Hill & Guthrie, 1999, p. 513) who will obediently and immediately administer teacher-proof

curricula in their classrooms. The potential for successful implementation of a district's or

state's new programs or innovations and their benefits for students is much greater if teachers can learn together, try new ways of teaching, and share effective as well as ineffective practices with each other over an extended period of time (Darling-Hammond, Chung Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). Teachers can experience greater professional growth and development of their teaching practices, not simply by attending workshops and watching demonstrations, but by exploring and experimenting with new ideas in their own classrooms, ideas which they have learned from the sharing of knowledge with other teachers.

Significance of the Research

The benefits of learning from teachers who have experienced success individually and school-wide as they learned to share and integrate their ideas, skills, and resources through collaboration can inform the field of education. The study and practice of collegiality is a worthwhile pursuit because "something is gained when teachers work together and something is lost when they do not" (Little, 1990b, p. 166). However, Gable, Mostert, and Tonelson (2004) noted that "many important aspects of collaboration have not been adequately been investigated" (p. 5). In particular, little research had been conducted regarding how teacher collaboration affected teachers themselves (Little, 1990b). The review of the literature for the present study also reflected a paucity of research on teachers' views of their experiences with professional collaboration. Learning from successful teachers could greatly enhance the professional development of individual educators as they contribute to student learning. The present study focused on gaining the perceptions of teachers who have collaborated successfully with their colleagues and were willing to participate in the qualitative, in-depth interviews used to collect

data. By doing so, research results from the present study can contribute to the knowledge base and practice of education (Merriam, 1998).

Experienced teachers are often the ones who know which educational programs, practices, and techniques work or do not work in supporting student learning. These abilities or actions of experienced teachers are driven by what Eisner (1998) termed qualitative thought, which is "fine-grained" (p. 38) analysis of educational practices. Such teachers are a rich source for knowledge and understanding of the art and craft of teaching. This study did indeed provide knowledge with regard to the role of collaboration in the teaching practice of experienced elementary-school teachers.

This study of experienced teachers and their collaborative involvements can provide multiple benefits to those in education. By engaging with the teachers' perceptions of the collaborative process and understanding the data-analysis process, readers may acquire knowledge of how one group of teachers perceived the complex process of collaboration. Readers may then apply, or transfer, from these specific perceptions to the practice of other teachers, a process termed naturalistic generalization (Patton, 2002; Stake, 2000). The present study can provide three advantages which are very similar to the advantages afforded to generalization from single-case studies (Donmoyer, 1990). First, such a study could provide accessibility, allowing the reader to travel to places where most would not have the chance to go. Secondly, the reader would be given the opportunity to vicariously see through the researcher's and participants' eyes. A third advantage was described by Donmoyer as decreased defensiveness. In other words, those in the field of education may feel decreased defensiveness, or feel less threatened and less resistant to learning from the participants in the study. Instead,

after seeing through the perspectives of successful collaborating teachers, educators may be more likely to reflect upon and enhance their own current educational practices (Dallmer, 2004; Donmoyer, 1990; Eisner, 1998).

A statement made by Friend (2000) supports the significance of this study even further. "As education professionals, we must renew our commitment to being students of collaboration in order to prepare ourselves to face the complexities and uncertainties of the future of our field. No single one of us can do it alone" (p. 160). Although much is already known about teacher collaboration, this study was designed so that others can learn from the perceptions of teachers who had lived and worked extensively in intensive collaborative settings. By listening to and learning from teachers who had collaborated closely with their colleagues, whether they were peer teachers in a co-teaching setting, teachers who departmentalized with each other, or teachers in self-contained classrooms working down the hall from each other, this study can significantly contribute to the knowledge base of teacher collaboration (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2000).

Chapter Summary

Chapter One presented an introduction to this study and a brief overview of teacher collaboration. It also addressed the purpose of this study, the research question, and the research design. Chapter One also included a discussion of the significance of this study and its possible benefits to those in the field of education.

Chapter Two provides a review of the literature related to teacher collaboration, beginning with an historical perspective of some significant examples of collaboration and its potential power. The chapter describes what is known about the models, levels, advantages as well as disadvantages of collaboration, and necessary elements for successful collaboration in

educational settings. It also discusses what appear to be gaps in what is known and understood about teacher collaboration. Chapter Two concludes with a summary of the literature of this field, the conceptual framework for the study, and a confirmation of the need for this study.

Chapter Three describes the research design, procedures, and methodology for this qualitative research study, in addition to the process of selecting the site and participants. It includes a discussion of the application of educational connoisseurship, educational criticism, and appropriate procedures for the presentation and interpretation of the research data. Ethical considerations and research limitations are also examined, along with procedures to ensure the security of data. In the final portion of Chapter Three, "Researcher as Tool," I share my professional and personal experiences as a teacher learning to collaborate with my own colleagues and how these experiences may have influenced the research process.

Chapter Four describes, interprets, and evaluates the data gathered from semi-structured, in-depth interviewing during which the participants shared their perceptions of their professional experiences involving collaboration. Eisner's (1998) concepts of educational connoisseurship and educational criticism provided the overall framework for data analysis, with the literature of the field facilitating the interpretation of the data. Hatch's (2002) typological analysis provided guidelines for developing the typologies that initially organized the data for further data analysis using educational criticism. Eisner's dimension of thematics facilitated the development of recurring messages embedded in the analysis of the data.

Chapter Five includes a brief summary of the previous four chapters describing the present study, along with limitations of the study. The chapter then addresses how the results of data analysis can be appropriately generalized within the qualitative research paradigm. A

discussion of how the study may be seen as credible ensues, followed by recommendations for

collaborative practice in schools and recommendations for future research in education focusing

on collaboration as a process.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In an ever-increasing wave of literature, educational scholars are discussing, describing, and even demanding collaboration as a necessity in the field of education. Federal and state laws are now requiring that universities teach their special and general education teacher candidates how to collaborate and co-teach in preparation for the likely event that they will be teaching inclusion classes (Casey, 2019; Kleinhammer-Tramill, Tramill, & Brace, 2010; Ricci, Zetlin, & Osipova, 2017). In fact, on a larger scale, most jobs in the 21st century require competence in the skills of communicating and collaborating effectively with others (Darling-Hammond, 2008b). Collaboration has proven to be "a productive response to a world in which problems are unpredictable, solutions are unclear, and demands and expectations are intensifying" (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 245). As the demand for its practice increases, the need for deep understanding of collaboration also increases (Friend, 2000).

In education, meeting the requirements of guidelines and standards in the content areas also invokes the need for collaboration (Bush, 2003). When skillful collaborative leadership is put into action, it becomes a positive influence on student learning and has a positive impact on school improvement (Hill & Guthrie, 1999; Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006). Further, to reach the challenging goals of schooling and meet the complex needs of a widely diverse population of students, including students with special needs, school leaders and teachers should engage in more collaborative arrangements with each other (Beachum & Dentith, 2004; Friend, 2000).

Thus, collaboration can assist educators in accomplishing the many tasks demanded of them. Teachers are continually deluged with new information about teaching and learning, in combination with the demands of ongoing school reform efforts (Friend, 2000). Furthermore,

teachers must have the skills of an effective communicator and collaborator to best meet students' needs and to work successfully with parents and colleagues (Darling-Hammond, 2006). In summary, in order for professional educators to effectively manage every aspect of their jobs, collaboration is now and will continue to be essential.

This review of the literature discusses some of the many facets of collaboration in the field of education. Because teacher collaboration is not a new human endeavor, but fits within a much larger context, this review begins with a brief historical perspective using some significant examples of collaboration and its potential power to effect change in the lives of individuals, entire civilizations, and today's society.

In order to address the context of the present study, this review then focuses specifically on what is known about the process of collaboration in education. To promote an understanding of the literature regarding teacher collaboration, Chapter Two organizes the discussion under the following sections: collaboration's relationship to educational leadership, it's role in education and teacher leadership; models and levels of collaboration; the benefits of collaboration, followed by a discussion of teacher professional identity development and personal benefits; the challenges of collaboration; conflict in collaboration; and, the elements and conditions for successful collaboration. This review also includes discussion of future trends in the literature and perceived gaps in what is known and understood about teacher collaboration. Chapter Two concludes with the conceptual framework that served as the basis for the design of the present study, along with a confirmation of the need for this study and a summary of the literature review.

An Historical Perspective on Collaboration

Collaboration is a popular concept that appears in nearly every field of human activity, including business, education, medicine, law, and the nonprofit sector, especially regarding projects that should include collaboration among colleagues in order to receive grant funding (Bush, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Fullan, 2016). Although collaboration is viewed as a fresh idea, it is a fresh idea grown out of the work of those who have come before, having been in operation in various forms throughout history. Collaborative teams have made major discoveries, such as DNA, and inventions, such as airplanes, that have improved the quality of our daily lives (Bush, 2003). Thus, in spite of its popularity, no one should assume that the topic of collaboration is ephemeral and therefore not worth taking time to study.

An historical examination of collaboration demonstrates the potential power inherent in the collaborative process to effect positive or negative change, to solve problems, to attain goals, to enhance creativity, or to enable discovery of the unknown. Collaboration has occurred for centuries. History reveals a fascinating perspective on the power and influence of collaboration, ranging from that between two individuals, such as Socrates and his pupil (Bush, 2003; Rudebusch, 2009), to collaboration among thousands in the building of great civilizations.

The course of history and the quality of human life have been changed by people with a common purpose collaborating together to achieve a common goal. "Members of every society . . . need to be connected by a common framework and committed to some common good" (Sergiovanni, 1999, p. 12). In ancient civilizations, such as those of the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Chinese, Aztecs, Babylonians, and even the cavemen, collaboration of the people who lived in these civilizations, whether citizens or slaves, helped to advance their ways of life

(Goerner, 2003). These human societies of the past and present have been described as "collaborative learning systems" (p. 341) or "collaborative learning societies" (p. 342) that have survived and thrived by humankind pooling information and learning together.

One of history's most powerful examples of collaboration is the classic story of the Tower of Babel, found in the 3500-year-old teachings of the Torah and in Genesis 11: 1-9 (King James Version) in the Old Testament of the Bible. Scofield (1967), a biblical scholar, and Aaron (1998), a Jewish scholar, shed new light on this ancient Hebrew account. Descendants of Noah decided to build the Tower of Babel. They all spoke the same language and had a common purpose, which was to build a city and a tower that would reach the heavens. The purpose of their unity was to create a new moral code of living in which they could freely do whatever they wanted (Scofield, 1967). However, this would undermine the moral principles that God had established for the world (Aaron, 1998). In Aaron's translation of the Torah's account, God said, "Now there will be no barrier for them in all that they scheme to do" (p. 76). In other words, nothing they purposed to do together would be impossible for them. According to the scriptures, it took an act of God, confusion of the languages, to stop the success of such a powerful collaboration of this unified group.

From another point of view, Socrates, the Greek philosopher, teacher, and practitioner of "the art of living" (Hansen, 2010, p. 23) demonstrated how dialectic or philosophical collaborative conversation between two or more people could develop into a search for truth and, ultimately, self-knowledge (Bush, 2003; Rudebusch, 2009). This simple form of collaborative discourse has inspired great thinkers and influenced our patterns of thought for over 2,000 years.

In contrast, consider Leonardo da Vinci as he worked individually without any scientific community of colleagues in existence throughout his lifetime from 1452-1519. Bronowski (1978) explained:

> What has made science successful as a social leaven over that last three hundred years is its change from the practice of individuals, however great their ingenuity, to a communal enterprise. . . . One reason why immensely prolific, vivid, imaginative and inventive brains like Leonardo's failed to make any impact on the body of science was that there were no colleagues. . . . Even that tremendous mind could not work in isolation. (pp. 122-123)

This brief historical glimpse suggests that, without the benefit of colleagues working in collaboration, the greatest individuals had only a temporary influence.

Note: the section heading above has not been highlighted as it will adjust the formatting in the table of contents.

Collaboration in Today's Society

One can find reference to many extraordinary examples of how powerful and empowering collaboration can be in virtually every arena of life today. Schrage (1995) described several modern day vignettes of collaboration in which one group of experts worked together with another to achieve a common goal. Teams of professionals collaborate frequently in conference rooms, operating rooms, and airplane cockpits to solve genuine, sometimes even life-threatening, problems. Advertising agency account executives and their teams work together to design and plan how to present new campaigns to potential clients worth millions. A heart surgeon hurriedly discusses with the anesthesiologist whether to continue, alter, or terminate a

normally routine triple bypass operation on a patient who is suddenly showing critically dangerous life signs. A pilot of a transcontinental passenger jet seeks guidance from ground crew engineers to discuss options on how to safely land the plane after it has been struck twice by lightning, and panel lights indicate a drop in fuel and rising engine temperatures. These and countless other examples of collaboration occur around us daily in nearly every profession. Without the help or expertise of each collaborator, the goal would never be reached. Success would be impossible, even to the point of lives being lost.

When large disasters have occurred in the United States, a collaborative team approach has been the best way to manage all the details that cascade from their effects (Wilcox, 2005). In the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center, leaders in the nation's educational systems have been learning to collaborate with those in charge of public safety, local and state leaders, the media, emergency officials, and even food services staff to develop sound emergency response plans. After Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast of the United States in September 2005, many schools were either badly damaged or completely destroyed. These dangerous and unlivable conditions made attending school impossible for thousands of students. Through the collaborative efforts and compassion of other school systems willing to open their doors to the evacuated students, the education of these young people could resume.

Collaboration in School Settings

Collaboration among teachers within school settings shares many of the characteristics apparent in the above examples from various areas of everyday life. Countless teachers could be considered experts within their own fields of personal practical knowledge (Clandinin et al., 1993). Some of the most meaningful and effective professional development comes not from

teacher workshops or inservice activities but from colleagues sharing co-teaching classrooms or teaching in classrooms next door to each other or down the hall from each other (Jazzar & Algozzine, 2007). Teacher collaboration has enormous potential through the mutual sharing of knowledge, experience, and ideas for the purpose of effecting positive change in student learning and helping each other through the abundant challenges and demands of teaching.

Collaboration among teachers provides an opportunity for teachers to have a stronger voice in the educational process (Clandinin et al., 1993; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Hill & Guthrie, 1999; Sanders, 2002; Yonemura, 1986). Schools are not simply recipients and converters of legislated policies; neither are they collections of classrooms run by teachers, nor collections of specific instructional programs. Schools in which teachers are empowered through the exercise of wise self-rule (Tyack, 2001) and collaboration with colleagues can be considered to be what Hill and Guthrie (1999) characterized as "living organizations":

Each [school] constantly adapts its core ideas to fit a specific time and place, and to reflect student needs and faculty capacities. . . . The adults who work in a school must work together to learn many things: how to put basic ideas into practice, how to judge whether students are progressing satisfactorily, how to adapt the instructional program when students are not learning all they should, or when society demands that students learn new things. Adults in schools must also learn when to collaborate, when to work independently, when to compromise, and when to allow dissidents to split off. (p. 517)

Through collaboration, teachers empower each other. They become "active shapers of curriculum change. . . . Further, much of the skill and knowledge of good teaching is tacit knowledge of the teaching craft, best learned by teachers working with other teachers in collegial

settings" (Posner, 1995, p. 212). Therefore, teachers build the teaching capacity of themselves and their colleagues when they engage in the following kinds of collaborative activities: They collectively develop curriculum based on the essential knowledge, skills, and standards each student is to attain; they follow up with frequent teacher-made assessments to monitor their students' learning in a timely manner; they work together to analyze the results from their assessments; and, through shared data analysis of test results, teachers identify their students' strengths and weaknesses and help each other create and implement strategies to improve current levels of student learning and sustain school improvement (DuFour, 2004).

A recent multi-year research study by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) found that teacher collaboration has become a vital element in the success of professional development and school improvement. The NSDC study analyzed data about the nature of professional development available to teachers throughout the United States (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) to determine what constituted effective professional development. One of the principal findings was that teachers who collaborated in intensive professional development activities sustained over time for an average of 49 hours each year produced distinct improvements in student achievement. Effective teacher collaboration can be correlated with a positive lasting impact on teachers' professional development and the overall improvement of schools (DuFour, 2004).

Teaching and Educational Leadership

Teaching, teacher leadership, and teacher collaboration have evolved and taken many forms since the isolated one-room schoolhouse of the 1800s. "Early in the nineteenth century, Thomas Jefferson argued that locally controlled public schools were key democratic institutions .

. . which gave adult citizens a chance to exercise self-rule" (Tyack, 2001, pp. 1-2). Jefferson also maintained that such schools were pivotal in raising well-informed and well-educated future citizens (Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006). In the early 20th century, John Dewey, who became known as "the father of progressive education" (Ravitch, 2001, p. 76), continued the argument for democracy in education by saying that the public school system needed to be reorganized in such a way that would allow teachers to express their opinions on matters of educational importance, with the assurance that their input would somehow have an effect on the school system. Dewey was encouraging public school administrators to give heed to the voices of teachers rather than to continue to make bureaucratic decisions and dictates, expecting teachers to simply obey (Ravitch, 2001).

A recurring analogy in the educational leadership literature regarding collaboration, teaming, and the field of education itself, uses a nautical context of oceans and navigating through turbulence and storms (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Cuban, 1993; Eisner, 1998; Starratt, 2004). Administrators and teachers as educational leaders have been compared to "captains of ships" and "crew members" (Starratt, 2004, p. 29) who must exemplify moral leadership by guiding their ships, or school systems, forward on their mission through continuous turbulent storms without capsizing or being blown off course. The storms were brought about by human forces, natural forces, and the transitions of globalization.

Starratt (2004) further developed his analogy of steering ships using the light of collaboration:

The crew members must be engaged in learning more about the storm, in mastering the traditional skills and technologies of seamanship and in applying these to the new

conditions of turbulence they face. Furthermore, they must grow in their ability to trust

and rely on one another. (p. 30)

Starratt concluded his analogy by imploring administrators and educators to collaborate with

each other concerning needed changes in the curriculum and assessments of student learning. He

claimed that those in education who "knowingly tolerate inauthentic and irresponsible learning

reveal their leadership as educationally and morally bankrupt" (p. 30).   In fact, principals and

teachers are professionally obligated to seek and implement best practices in their schools. "The

research is clear and compelling . . . that best practice, the best hope for helping all students

learn, is to have teachers working together in a collaborative culture" (DuFour, 2003, p. 72).

Collaboration's Role in Education

The following portion of Chapter Two includes perspectives on and elements of

collaboration and its role in education. One is reminded that no individual human being is

omniscient. "We cannot see everything from all sides. That is why, as we all dwell in the

human condition, we need the companionship of our colleagues, who can share in the journey

and add texture to our solitary view of the world" (Bush, 2003, p. 2). Collaboration can be a

search for self-knowledge and a journey to be shared by listening to and learning from different

perspectives and points of view.

A study of highly productive schools by Hill and Guthrie (1999) added to the definition

of collaboration with the identification of certain elements these schools had in common:

"commitment to learning, personal attention to students, and disciplined collaboration among

adults" (p. 516). The first two elements associated with the productive school, commitment to

learning and personal attention to students, are attitudes and actions that are experienced and

accomplished personally by each individual teacher. However, the third element, disciplined collaboration among adults, suggested that collaboration among adults could, in turn, enhance educators' commitment to learning and their desire to give authentic, personal attention to students.

Highly productive schools in which teachers regularly collaborate with each other tap into what Hill and Guthrie (1999) described as their human, social, and intellectual capital. Hill and Guthrie suggested that researchers should approach schools as being "productive, problem-solving organizations" (p. 512). Schools that were considered to be highly productive were high in "integrative capital" (p. 515). The authors described the concept of integrative capital as "the glue that holds a school together, its shared understanding of how financial, social, intellectual, human, and political capital can be used together successfully in a purposeful and consistent instructional program" (p. 515). Educators and administrators working in a school with a high level of integrative capital have a clearly defined approach to instruction and to the internal management of the school. Such a school is a living organization, a community of adults working together, taking the initiative and the responsibility for their students' learning.

In addition to schools being considered as living, productive, problem-solving organizations, schools can also be viewed as learning organizations (Senge et al., 2000; Tschannen-Moran, Uline, Hoy, & Mackley, 2000). Two mechanisms that enable schools to be learning organizations are "collaboration between teachers and collaboration between administrators and teachers" (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2000, p. 249). Using those mechanisms, a school's ability to problem-solve within an ever-changing environment and its capacity to achieve the primary mission of educating students can be enhanced.

By regarding schools as both learning organizations and living, productive, problem-solving organizations, the significance of teachers collaborating with their colleagues in such schools takes on even greater importance. However, there is another aspect of schools which Hill and Guthrie (1999) wanted today's educational leaders to consider as they face challenges of change and the uncertainties that could result. Productive schools also function as learning communities. A highly productive school is a community that can build unity among its own members, build bridges across its constituencies, and simultaneously enhance the individuality of its students through the belief that their shared values are greater than their differences. Collaboration is a process that facilitates the development of such a community.

In 1958, early legislation was initiated to improve the "quantity and quality of teachers for America's schools" (Kleinhammer-Tramill & Fiore, 2003, p. 217).   In a succession of federal and state mandates, leading to the passage of Public Law 94-142, the *Education of All Handicapped Children Act* in 1975 (p. 220), educational services were then required to be provided for all students with disabilities, including students who were previously unserved. In 1990, and again in 1997, the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) mandated "improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities by promoting high expectations, improving their access to the general education curriculum and high state standards" (p. 224). New teachers had to be better prepared to assist students with disabilities in accessing the general education curriculum.

Federal mandates, such as the Every Student Succeeds Act, which was signed into law in 2015, have increased the level of inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular classroom setting, with the support of ESE teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016). Therefore, teacher

preparation programs and professional development opportunities now provide instruction in developing teachers' collaboration and co-teaching skills. Ricci et al. (2017) described several more of the mandates and their expectations:

> The Individuals with Disabilities Education and Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 mandates that students with disabilities be given maximum opportunities to access the general education curriculum, while No Child Left Behind (NCLB 2001) required school accountability in including students with disabilities in high-stakes assessments. Although the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 shifts accountability provisions from the federal government to states and school districts, these federal regulations together indicate that special educators must collaborate more frequently and more effectively with general educators to align instruction with grade-level standards and to maintain high expectations for students with disabilities. (p. 687)

Collaboration is no longer an option for teachers of general education and teachers of special education who work together. They collaborate in different ways, sometimes in co-teaching settings or inclusion classes, to meet the needs of students with disabilities or special needs. The establishment of inclusion classrooms, in which children with disabilities spend most or all of their days in general education classrooms, has ended the practice of placing "children with disabilities in separate, and potentially unequal, classrooms" (Kleinhammer-Tramill, Tramill, & Brace, 2010, p. 196). Thus, learning the practice of effective collaboration skills is critical for general and special educators working in schools.

With such monumental responsibilities and expectations placed on teachers' shoulders by society, there is little wonder that Dewey's (2006) pedagogical creed of 1897 included his belief

That every teacher should realize the dignity of his calling; that he is a social servant set

apart for the maintenance of proper social order and the securing of the right social

growth. . . . That in this way the teacher always is the prophet of the true God and the

usherer in of the true kingdom of God. (Dewey, 2006, p. 30)

Such beliefs place the teaching profession on a very "precarious pedestal" (p. 30) and validate

the statement that teachers must collaborate with colleagues, administrators, and parents to

provide the best education possible for their children.

Collaboration and Teacher Leadership

Any discussion of collaboration leads to the concept of leadership and teacher leadership

(Hargreaves, 1994). However, a clear, concise definition of teacher leadership has been as

elusive as the definition of leadership itself (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Leadership can be

described as "not something that one does to people, nor is it a manner of behaving toward

people: It is working with and through other people to achieve organizational goals" (Owens,

1998, p. 206). Leadership has also been described as an organization-wide phenomenon of

social influence that can be practiced among multiple leaders and followers, occurring in-

between people (Donaldson, 2001; Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002). Leadership can simply be

the act of "making happen what you believe in" (Barth, 1990, p. 515). In an educational setting,

this concept of leadership could be embraced by those other than administrators, including

teachers, librarians, guidance counselors, parents, students, and anyone who wishes to make

happen those things in which they believe.

The educational leadership literature emphasizes the Burns concept of transformational

leadership (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996; Murphy & Louis, 1999; Owens, 1998).

Transformational leadership changes the basic character of an organization and, in educational settings, such leadership can guide educators toward fundamentally reconsidering and reevaluating their work. Explained in greater depth, "this transformative team-building process must include constant attention to the building of greater levels of trust not only between the leader and the followers, but among the collaborating followers as well" (Owens, 1998, p. 224). Transformational leaders understand that leadership is a never-ending process of growth, development, and learning. Indeed, learning and leading are considered to be inseparable (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Transformational leaders also realize that this style of leadership can enhance teachers' ability to learn the skills required for active participation in teamwork and collaboration, and for participation in the team-building process itself.

The theme of leadership is central in researchers' conversations about improving K-12 education (Spillane, 2003). An extensive review of the literature regarding teacher leadership, distributive leadership, and self-managed teams indicated the emergence of teacher leadership in the last quarter of the 20th century as an established feature of educational reform in the United States (Smylie et al., 2002). However, discussions of teacher leadership as a means of reform dated back to the early 1900s when Dewey and other progressive educators wanted to reshape schools as democratic communities.

In the 1980s and 1990s teacher leadership initiatives were intended for school improvement and professionalizing the teacher workforce. What actually occurred was the "appointment and anointment" of individual teachers to new "quasi-administrative positions" (Smylie et al., 2002, pp. 164-166). These added responsibilities caused problems for teacher leaders, including work overload, stress, and conflict for the teachers as they tried to handle their

new school-level burdens along with their classroom responsibilities. This form of teacher leadership was not the answer for which reformers were looking (Johnson, 2003; Smylie et al., 2002).

In the mid-1990s teacher leadership also began to include the notion of teacher as researcher (Smylie et al., 2002). This resulted in greater benefits for teachers in their professional development and their school improvement efforts as they learned to "become more reflective, critical, and analytical not just of their own teaching but of schooling practices around them" (p. 169). Murphy (2005) also noted that in the mid-1990s, research was becoming an important element in the role of teacher leadership, particularly in the areas of curriculum and instructional programs.

At the same time, several models of distributive leadership appeared in the educational literature. Distributive leadership was defined by Smylie et al., (2002) as leadership exercised by people in both formal positions of authority and outside those positions. This type of leadership was distributed and performed across roles, thereby shifting attention away from individual and role-based conceptions of leadership and toward organizational, task-oriented conceptions of leadership.

In addition to these organizational approaches to the sharing of leadership tasks, self-managed teams, or teams that operate within their own responsibility and discretion, also have developed. These self-managed teams have been effective in promoting teacher collaboration, improvement in teaching and student learning, and addressing problems school-wide (Smylie et al., 2002). The self-managed team model bears strong resemblance to one model of collaboration to be discussed in the next section.

Models of Collaboration

To teachers, collaboration can entail a variety of experiences or formats, depending on their perceptions of the administration's demands, their students' needs, and their own expectations and desires. Fishbaugh (1997) described three distinct models of collaboration. The consulting or expert model, more like a workshop, operates when an expert gives advice to a less knowledgeable person or group of people. Information flows one way, from the consultant to the person or group. Second, the coaching or parity model occurs when two or more people take turns advising each other. In this model, information flows two ways, but not simultaneously. The third model is the teaming or interactive model.

> The teaming model of collaboration is defined by interaction. All members of the team have equal ownership of team problems and solutions. In the teaming model, information flows in several directions at once, from one member to the others, as different members assume leadership or follower roles dictated by situational needs. (p. 5)

Of the three models, the teaming model is the most educationally democratic model for it would allow each member of the team to have equal value in the collaborative process and equal opportunity and freedom to grow and improve as a teacher (Tyack, 2001).

Another model of teacher collaboration is co-teaching. Co-teaching has been defined as "two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse or blended group of students in a single physical space" (Cook & Friend, 2017, p. 2). A more simplified definition for co-teaching is "two or more teachers who are equal in status located in the classroom together, working together, and providing instruction" (Dieker & Murawski, 2003, p. 3). There

are six approaches or variations for providing instruction in the co-teaching model (Friend et al., 2010). The following is a brief description of these six approaches to co-teaching and each co-teacher's role:

- One teach, one observe: one teacher leads large-group instruction while the other gathers data on specific students or groups;

- Station teaching: instruction is divided into three parts and students rotate from station to station;

- Parallel teaching: the two teachers split the class in half and teach the same material but with greater differentiation for each group;

- Alternative teaching: one teacher works with a larger group, the other works with a smaller group for remediation, assessment, or other purposes;

- Teaming: both teachers lead large group instruction together demonstrating a variety of ways to approach what is being taught; and

- One teach, one assist: one teacher leads instruction while the other teacher circulates and offers assistance where needed. (p. 12)

These six roles for the co-teachers are fluid, depending on which approach the teachers agree upon for instructional delivery. These co-teaching roles may occur for portions of the school day or for the entire school day, depending on the needs of the students.

Levels of Collaboration

As the push for creating collaborative cultures, collaborative environments, and professional learning communities in schools increases, so do the variations and levels of collaboration. Unfortunately, much of what passes for collaboration in schools is simply

socialization, storytelling, or attempts to build consensus on routine issues with no impact on improving teaching practices and student achievement (DuFour, 2003; Little, 1990a; 2003). These informal gatherings have been nicknamed "collaboration lite" (DuFour, 2003, p. 63).

Little (1990a) conducted an analysis of the accumulated literature discussing various forms of teacher collegiality and their consequences on school improvement. She argued that "the most common configurations of teacher-to-teacher interaction may actually do more to bolster isolation than to diminish it" (p. 511). Little identified four conceptions or types of collaboration and aligned them in a continuum moving from traditional teacher autonomy and independence to more rigorous interdependence. The types are: storytelling and scanning for ideas, aid and assistance, sharing, and joint work. Little distinguished these four types based on their influence on teacher autonomy and teaching practice.

Little's (1990a) first type of collaboration, storytelling and scanning for ideas, involved little more than teachers sharing various stories or ideas at different moments throughout the day, which had the tendency to bolster isolation and sustain rather than change teaching practices. The second type, aid and assistance, involved colleagues giving each other help and advice, but only when asked, and thus having little or no effect on teaching practices. Sharing, the third conception of collegiality, described "a robust but harmonious exchange of insights and methods" (Little, 1990a, p. 518), including exchanging materials, ideas, and opinions among teachers. However, there were various degrees of collaboration within the sharing concept, depending upon the fragility of the teachers' self esteem, relationships, competitiveness, or desire for noninterference. In summary, these three types or conceptions of collegiality placed few demands for change or growth on teachers' autonomy and their teaching practices.

The fourth and final type of teacher collaboration defined by Little (1990a) was joint work. The cases Little identified as having joint work were fewer in number, but they stood out beyond the other three types as evidenced by the teachers' interdependence. Encounters among these teachers involved a "balance of personal support with hard-nosed deliberation about present practice and future direction" (p. 520). These teachers examined the merit of each other's teaching practices, monitored students' progress, and helped each other to further their professional development and personal satisfaction as teachers.

Benefits of Collaboration

The benefits of collaboration fall into two categories: Collaboration can enhance teachers' professional lives and teaching practices in numerous ways that, ultimately, can positively impact student learning and school improvement; and individual teachers can receive personal benefits from collaboration. This section first describes the professional advantages and benefits of collaboration for teachers, followed by ways teacher collaboration can benefit students and, ultimately, entire schools.

The benefits of collaboration within a community of educators who respect, trust, and care about each other are parallel to the benefits for students in the kind of learning environments advocated by John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and other highly respected educators (Rogers, 2002; Yonemura, 1986; Yowell & Smylie, 1999). These authorities encouraged learners at any age to actively generate knowledge out of daily experiences. For teachers, this collaborative learning can result in the development of curriculum, the development of ongoing peer relations, and the development of self-regulation and reflection. Such a collaborative

environment can thus empower teachers with a heightened awareness of their abilities as learners and teachers (Pamplin, 1993).

Collaboration pools the collected knowledge, experience, and abilities of the teachers involved. It provides opportunities for teachers to learn from each other through feedback and comparison and to reflect more on their own practices. "Collaboration is a powerful source of professional learning, of getting better at the job. In collaborative organizations, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" (Hargreaves, 1994, pp. 246-247). Indeed, teachers have often responded that informal conversations with colleagues and friends are preferred over other sources such as inservice activities, college courses, and other institutionalized means of professional development (Lortie, 1975). "A teacher's day-to-day work becomes a form of high-quality professional development" (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 6) when a school provides learning opportunities, such as study groups, peer coaching, and assessment of student work, in which teams of teachers work together and experience focused, ongoing professional learning (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

A very practical benefit from teacher collaboration is its potential for increasing efficiency. Teachers collaborating together can facilitate the best teaching decisions when time is short, the need is great, and immediate action is necessary (Watson, Abel, Lacina, Alexander, & Mayo, 2002). Frequently, circumstances in an educational setting necessitate rapid decision-making and demand immediate action. Collaboration provides teachers with greater access to information, to each other's expertise, and to a better construction of understanding of each other's work. Teachers are better able to coordinate activities and share responsibilities in complementary ways. Together, teachers can design common assessments, integrate curriculum,

and analyze student work and data (Hargreaves, 1994; Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006). Further, sharing ideas and resources through collaboration can eliminate duplication and redundancy among teachers and subjects.

When teachers are working collaboratively, the loneliness of isolation behind closed classroom doors is usually no longer a problem for them. They can provide more intellectual assistance and moral support for each other, enabling each other to strengthen their resolve and to focus their attention and coordinated action more effectively on student learning (Hargreaves, 1994; Smylie et al., 2002). By sharing with colleagues the burdens and pressures of intensified work demands and rapid changes, individual teachers do not have to shoulder these responsibilities alone.

Collaboration can address isolation from another perspective. The experience of collaboration helps teachers avoid "professional atrophy" (Smith & Scott, 1990, p. 10) which can occur when teachers only practice their own teaching methods and try to learn teaching strategies in isolation without any input from colleagues. Further, collaboration has enabled teachers to have the freedom to learn more about other curriculum areas taught by their colleagues (Johnson, 2003).

In contrast, teachers who resist the practice of collaborating with colleagues by deliberately maintaining their isolated status often limit their own professional growth (Shaw & Jacubowski, 1991; Smith & Scott, 1990). Further, teachers working in isolation often suffer apprehension when faced with educational reforms. They tend to delay making necessary changes and improvements in their practices even when they are genuinely open to new ideas and willing to change (Shaw & Jacubowski, 1991). By refusing the support of colleagues,

isolated teachers deny themselves the opportunities to learn how to share their concerns, frustrations, and ideas, how to visualize themselves practicing new teaching methods, and how to actually make viable changes in their teaching practices. Instead, these teachers tend to remain unchanged and continue their familiar, but less effective, teaching practices.

Well-orchestrated collaboration in its strongest forms empowers teachers in the political arena. "Collaboration strengthens the confidence to adopt externally introduced innovations, the wisdom to delay them and the moral fortitude to resist them, where appropriate" (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 246). Teachers united in collaboration can confidently and assertively interact with the reforms, innovations, and demands from their educational political systems.

Teachers who collaborate are more proactive in changing their classroom practices and developing strategies to address the problems and needs of struggling students. They tend to communicate earlier and more frequently with parents and to deal with student problems earlier and more systematically (Smylie et al., 2002). Such teachers can create supportive learning communities within their schools and better support their students in developing the successful practices and habits essential to doing schoolwork (Darling-Hammond & Ifill-Lynch, 2006). The educational experiences, and, indeed, the very lives of students, can be enhanced by the caring attention of collaborating teachers.

Many teachers have reported that sharing the workload through collaborative teaming can provide vital teacher-to-teacher support, particularly in the area of student discipline (Cangelosi, 2004; Conley & Muncey, 1999; Johnson, 2003). Collaborating teachers can routinely consult with trusted colleagues, share ideas, and seek help without the fear of embarrassment when confronted with particularly difficult disciplinary situations.

Nieto (2003) described another facet of collaboration that has provided unique benefits to many veteran teachers: collaboration across generations. An appreciable yet common benefit to new teachers is to have the opportunity to collaborate with highly respected mentors. Experiences and lessons learned from these esteemed mentors can influence and inspire new teachers throughout their entire teaching careers. However, some veteran teachers have learned that new teachers can give them "a thread of hope to cling to" (p. 60). Veteran teachers often suffer some degree of burnout because of the many inevitable difficult and emotionally tough situations faced in school settings. New teachers who come into the classroom with idealism, energy, hope, intelligence, and a desire to make a difference, can give veteran teachers a renewed sense of enthusiasm, regeneration, and commitment to their work (Nieto, 2003, 2009).

An unusual benefit to both students and teachers in collaborative school settings is resiliency. Resiliency is defined as "the ability to bounce back successfully, despite exposure to severe risks" (Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006, p. 18). Students and adults thrive in schools where they are well known, where the school environment is supportive and purposeful, where expectations are high, and where the participation of adults and students are valued. Schools that have a collaborative culture can provide these benefits; therefore, teachers in such schools can create a nurturing community that fosters resiliency in both its teachers and its students. These teachers understand that they are forging future citizens who have a better chance to succeed in life. Teachers who have the compassion to collaborate with each other to develop solutions for students having problems can equip their students with the knowledge, understanding, and skills to pursue their full potential and to contribute to the good of society.

Schools can benefit in many ways from teachers who work collaboratively with each other. Through teacher collaboration, school staff can more effectively learn and adapt to changes in policies, expectations, and circumstances that continually affect schools today (Darling-Hammond, 2008a; Smylie et al., 2002). Schools in which teachers employ collaborative strategies for instructional improvement to address problems school-wide are becoming "smarter" (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2000, p. 247). Collaboration time enables teachers to work together to further students' achievement and success (DuFour, 2004; Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006).

Schools also benefit when teachers gain experience in using collaborative processes (Cozart et al., 2003; Smylie et al., 2002). Teachers who successfully collaborate tend to spend more time talking about curricular issues and are generally more knowledgeable about curricular and instructional matters. Also, they are more likely to develop coordinated curricular and instructional plans and to integrate their instruction across subject areas. The collaborative experiences reported by Cozart et al., (2003) document how the processes themselves support complex work in culturally sensitive areas of the curriculum. Thus, the processes of collaboration themselves can become generalized.

Middle schools have experienced enormous success in their efforts to reform and improve middle-grades education through teachers collaborating within interdisciplinary teams or through teacher teamwork (George, 2009). Initially, in the 1970s, school planners sought to manage school enrollments to accommodate school district racial desegregation or changing demographic patterns by creating middle schools. However, at the same time, many educators sought to develop educational practices best suited for the early adolescence developmental

period. By using various strategies of teaming, looping, and grouping teachers and students, educators discovered that "the better they knew their students, the better educational outcomes were" (p. 7).

When considering all the advantages of collaboration, there is little doubt that it can benefit teachers, students, and schools alike.

> Collaboration improves the quality of student learning by improving the quality of teachers' teaching. Collaboration encourages risk-taking, greater diversity in teaching strategies, and improved senses of efficacy among teachers as self-confidence is boosted by positive encouragement and feedback. All these things   impact upon and benefit student learning. (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 245)

Therefore, collaboration can be a powerful method of providing teachers with effective, continual professional development as they share with each other their own personal practical knowledge of the challenging art and craft of teaching in 21st century schools.

Teacher Professional Identity Development

The literature described an aspect of collaboration that was a new concept to this researcher at the beginning of the present study: the aspect of teacher professional identity development. According to Gee (2001), "researchers in a variety of areas have come to see [teacher] identity as an important analytic tool for understanding schools and society" (p. 99). Although the present study focused on teachers' perspectives of the collaborative process, the development and formation of teacher professional identity played an important role in how these teachers perceived the collaborative process.

Teacher professional identity can be described in several ways: "how teachers define themselves to themselves and to others" (Lasky, 2005, p. 901) and, "how teachers make sense of themselves and their work as educators" (Passmore & Hart, 2019, p. 180). Beijaard (2019) defined teachers' identity as being their "overall conception of who they are as teachers, who they believe they are, and who they want to be as teachers" (p. 1). In addition to understanding what teacher professional identity is, it is also important to understand that teachers' professional identity develops and changes as teachers work with each other (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Passmore & Hart, 2019). Teachers' beliefs about themselves and their roles as teachers also strongly influence the way they teach and communicate with their students (Vidovic & Domovic, 2019), and thus affect their students' learning.

When people decide to enter the field of education to become teachers, their perspectives would, at first, be that of teacher candidates by reason of their position in a college of education. Gee (2001) described this perspective as an "institutional identity" (p. 102). Now that teacher candidates are learning collaboration and co-teaching skills in university settings in teacher preparation programs, the opportunity to learn these skills is giving many of them a sense of their personal growth as effective educators even before they enter the work force (Ricci et al., 2017). When teachers finally graduate and enter professional settings, they experience interactions with their students and their colleagues in the practice of teaching, including the process of participation and sharing in collaborative settings. Gee (2001) referred to this part of the teaching experience as a "perspective on identity [called] the affinity perspective (or A-Identities)" (p. 105). The shift from being a teacher candidate in a college classroom to being a teacher having full responsibility for a classroom of students is a significant change.

Educators also see themselves as teachers through their experiences in their teaching practices and through participating and sharing with other teachers. For example, Kilpatrick and Fraser (2019) noted that "effective professional learning communities are crucial for supporting and developing the practice and identity formation of beginning teachers. Professional networks facilitate collegial learning and continuous improvement of professional practice of all teachers." (p. 614). Otherwise, without the continual support of learning communities, beginning teachers may discover that there is a chasm between university idealism and school reality (Sahlberg, 2015). Further, reflective practice in a collegial relationship can foster teachers' awareness of their identities and the ways in which they are being shaped and supported in their professional growth (Passmore & Hart, 2019).

In a two-year project involving teacher leadership, Cheung, Reinhardt, Stone, and Little (2018) determined that "over the two years of this project, the teacher leaders strengthened their identity as agents of instructional change in their schools" (p. 44). In a meta-analysis of how professional capital can amplify change through continuous professional learning, Fullan (2016) referred to the 10,000 hour rule for individuals who want to become professionals accomplished at their trade: "10,000 hours of deliberate practice over 10 years or more" (p. 48). Fullan added, "I suppose it is obvious that this process can be accelerated when people are learning from each other" (p. 48). When teachers experience collaboration with their colleagues, and their teaching practices change, and, as a result, they see their students' learning increase, that experience can change how they perceive themselves as teachers. Indeed, many factors influence how teachers' professional identities develop, and collaboration with colleagues is one of the most powerful influences.

Personal Benefits

Robert Bellah (1989), a sociologist and theologian, made an observation that set the stage for recognizing the personal benefits of what he referred to as community and, hence, of relevance to collaboration in the present study. "The dignity and value of the individual person is realized in and through community, not in isolation from community" (p. 283). The value of community lies in its fostering of personal growth and self-esteem.

The collaborative process can have a profound impact on the personal lives of teachers in addition to the professional advantages and growth afforded to them (Cramer & Stivers, 2007; Johnson, 2003; Smylie et al., 2002). Indeed, the professional benefits of collaboration are numerous. Teachers who collaborate with each other often experience greater work satisfaction and a rejuvenated sense of professionalism and professional efficacy. Through the processes of teacher peer relations and collaboration teachers can experience many personal benefits, such as self-confidence, independence, higher self-esteem, and a stronger sense of trust (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Johnson & Johnson, 2009), along with the positive professional and school-wide benefits.

The rationale for the connection of collaboration to personal benefits is partially psychological. Johnson and Johnson (2009) reviewed more than 1200 research studies of cooperative learning to argue how social interdependence theory helped explain the benefits for and impact on psychological health from such interactions. The participants across the studies were not just students or teachers in schools, but they ranged in age from high school seniors to senior adults. Some of the participants included Olympic players, prisoners, university individuals, and business managers. Analysis of this research strongly indicated there were

greater psychological health benefits for those who worked cooperatively with their peers than for those who competed with peers or worked independently.

> More specifically, cooperativeness is positively related to emotional maturity, well-adjusted social relations, strong personal identity, ability to cope with adversity, social competencies, basic trust and optimism about people, self-confidence, independence and autonomy, higher self-esteem, and increased perspective taking skills. (p. 372)

These results lend support to what the literature reports regarding the benefits for teachers who collaborate versus teachers who work in isolation.

Teachers have reported that collaboration has had a positive impact on their morale, self-esteem, and sense of belonging and ownership in their profession (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Johnson, 2003). Teachers have described how their feelings about their work improved, including having a new and greater sense of commitment and enthusiasm toward their chosen profession, accompanied by lower stress levels and reductions in absenteeism. Teachers who had the courage and a strong enough sense of security to share their own strengths and weaknesses, both personally and professionally, with each other have reported that they have developed a stronger sense of trust, openness, and feelings of collegiality. Working in schools with collaborative cultures has provided many teachers with more productive and satisfying work environments.

Challenges of Collaboration

Teachers and administrators should understand that the collaborative process can also involve challenges and difficulties. As schools become more collaborative, this process inevitably generates change in its participants. Attempts to collaborate can disrupt existing roles

and working relationships with confusion and uncertainty as possible outcomes (Johnson, 2003). Glaser (1995) warned that "collaboration so often fails in a cloud of mutual distrust and hatred. It can be a treacherous and dangerous business" (Glaser, 1995, p. 103). There may be winners and losers, those who benefit from collaborative changes and those who do not. Collaboration has been described as "good for some, not so good for others" (Johnson, 2003, p. 337) and may negatively affect teachers' abilities to feel effective, valued, and in control.

Smylie et al., (2002) described how a school's resistance to teacher leadership, and the "teacher isolation and individualism, and the history of hierarchical relationships in schools may doom collaborative effort" (p. 183). Also, a school's culture can be a significant obstacle to overcome if teachers fail to realize the potentially positive effects of collaboration (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Many teachers will even put themselves in the position of "gatekeeper" (Lortie, 1975, p. 75) by placing themselves between outside influences, even the positive influences of their colleagues, and their students and classroom events. Such teachers resist trying new and better teaching practices and thus block opportunities for improved student learning in their own classrooms. To overcome such deeply ingrained structures and habits that resist change, teachers need support, professional development, and chances to participate in the change process; otherwise they can act as a "heavy anchor," dragging forward motion to a complete stop at times (Bolman & Deal, 1997).

Continuing the nautical context, Cuban (1993) created a visual image of teachers' typical resistance to change and reforms by comparing educational reforms and policies to storms that simply agitate the surface of the ocean and cause temporary turbulence. These educational reform storms are usually highly visible on the radar screens of central offices and board rooms

and appear to cause dramatic churning and major change. However, the reforms are often unable to disturb the serenity of the calm-but-murky, long-held classroom teaching practices that reside deep below the surface near the ocean's floor.

As teachers continue to resist change, collaboration can suffer the corruption of the "market model—you give me something, I'll give you something back" (Bellah, 1989, p. 282). This market model mentality can be very detrimental to the success of collaboration. Instead, genuine reciprocity is the desirable quality needed to enhance teacher collegiality (Conley & Muncey, 1999) in which teachers can freely share with each other without the attachment of strings, price tags, or ultimatums. In other words, teachers can enjoy having the opportunity to share different ideas and different ways of teaching with each other, yet have the freedom to disagree without accusing each other of being right or wrong.

Although one advantage of collaboration is increased efficiency through sharing of the work load and reducing duplication of tasks, collaboration does require teachers to meet more frequently for discussions and planning than if they were working in isolation (Johnson, 2003). Some teachers have complained that this is an added work burden for them because it means they have to commit to many more meetings in addition to what they already have. Many teachers have perceived collaboration as disadvantageous because they know that changing their teaching practices leads, at least initially, to an even heavier workload. Teachers, like most human beings, tend to resist acceptance of something that adds more time-consuming responsibilities to an already cumbersome workload, even when they know it can increase efficiency in the long run.

In the teaching profession, autonomy is deeply ingrained and can be an obstacle to collaboration (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Some teachers fear collaboration because it can create a sense of loss of independence and autonomy. Such teachers believe that they have to conform to all the expectations and decisions of their working team. Teachers involved in the collaborative process need to understand that authentic collaboration should not require them to sacrifice their autonomy, their own unique personality, or their freedom to continue teaching in their own unique style (Bush, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Friend, 2000; Johnson, 2003). "Individualistic convictions and personal predispositions of classroom teachers lead them to develop teaching practices consistent with their own experiences, personal style, and peculiar personalities" (Lortie, 1975, p. 75) and are at the very heart of becoming a teacher. Teachers have always preferred to have the freedom to adopt ideas of their peers by adapting the practices of others to their own personal styles and classroom situations.

On a larger scale, it is the nature of teachers, and people in general, to resist being told what to do. It is also the nature of people to "readily commit to making their own ideas work" (Oakley & Krug, 1991, p. 230). Teachers thus face a continuing struggle in having to decide whether to sacrifice what they know are good teaching practices for new and supposedly superior programs from the outside. For example, in one area of the country where carefully designed school reform and improvement were implemented, teachers expressed concerns with the incompatibilities of "an emerging view of professionalism as collective responsibility for standards of practice versus the view of professionalism as individual autonomy [personal conceptions of good teaching]" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005, pp. 69-70). These teachers also disliked the fact that the reforms required for systemic change left no room for school-level

programs which they considered to be successful, a situation that forced them to abandon some of their favorite practices. Therefore, even within the most innovative, collaborative groups of teachers committed to improving their practices, their professional development may be "both enabled and constrained" (Little, 2003,) by what their work requires of them.

Conflict in Collaboration

Studies suggest that not all teachers benefit from collaboration and teaming with other teachers (Anderson, 1999; Elmore, 2003; Hargreaves, 1994; Johnson, 2003, Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006; Little, 2003; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Teachers can have a wide variety of negative responses to collaboration. Some teachers simply do not have or do not want to apply the social skills or problem-solving abilities necessary for collaboration to be successful. Others may deliberately sabotage the process because they do not want it to work. In addition, there are those teachers who use collaborative situations to serve their own agendas. Johnson (2003) gave the following warning:

> The micropolitics of negotiating and enacting team-based collaboration is both complex and intriguing, but also damaging to the personal and professional lives of a minority of teachers. . . . It is likely that some groups and individuals will be silenced and marginalized, and that their professional standing will be compromised. . . . There are grounds for concern about the use of collaborative teams to "silence" dissent and debate and to promote conformity with majority norms and practices. (p. 349)

Tightly bound groups of collaborating teachers may become more like cliques and may result in the replacement of the isolated classroom teacher with isolated teacher groups capable of balkanizing the workplace (Little, 2003).

In collaborative teams, conflict can develop between those who attempt to work collaboratively and those who do not. Teachers who resist change due to insecurity or unwillingness can cause great friction in numerous ways. Some attempt to block the collaborative process by back-stabbing and feeding negative information to others, leaving a sense of dissatisfaction that may remain among members for an extended period of time (Johnson, 2003). Such efforts to sabotage collaboration can cause an increase in stress and anxiety for everyone involved. These potentially devastating scenarios may be the times in which educators and their administrators need to "allow dissidents to split off" (Hill & Guthrie, 1999, p. 517) before permanent damage is done.

If collaborating teams of teachers become factionalized, they may pull staff in different directions, causing confusion of set goals and leading to a breakdown in communication and isolation between teachers and teams (Johnson, 2003). The bad politics and policies of education happen when educators "deliberately choose not to engage in powerful collaborative learning around the central problems of [their] work and have instead organized [themselves] professionally and politically in fragmented ways" (Elmore, 2003, p. 10). Furthermore, power struggles can occur as one teacher, or one group of teachers, tries to dominate and devalue others. In addition, collaboration can foster divisive competition among teams of teachers and create "silos" (Blanchard, Ripley, & Parisi-Carew, 2015, p. 26) in which groups of people compete against each other and refuse to share ideas for the good of all.

At the level of individuals, teachers may attempt to block the collaborative process due to frustration and resentment toward a team member who, although bright and energetic, may want to always be in charge and make decisions for the team. Such a domineering team member

usually disregards the input of the other teachers, and their collaboration "ends up seeming like a 'one-way street' rather than a collaborative effort to decide what needs to be done and how" (Conley & Muncey, 1999, p. 50). This kind of controlling behavior usually leads to less cooperation among team members, sometimes even causing the collaborative process to fail.

Teachers who show resistance in the collaborative process can cause intense frustration and tension for everyone involved. However, resistance or conflict should not always be viewed as something to be avoided at all costs in collaboration because teachers can resist for good reasons (Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006). They may have something important to tell, or they may see problems and alternatives others do not see.

Controversy and conflict, however unpleasant they may be, are not necessarily negative as long as people continue talking to each other and come to agreement occasionally. Teachers can come to conclusions that most of them share, but arguments and conflicts are usually a natural, normal part of this process and not something to be feared (Bellah, 1989). In fact, "storming" (Levi, 2007, p. 39), or conflict among team members over control and group roles, is a normal and expected part of group or team formation. Nevertheless, many teachers try to avoid conflict.

Hargreaves' (2003) study of the emotional aspects of teachers' relationships with each other confirmed that teachers intensely disliked conflicts with their colleagues and felt strong positive emotions when their colleagues agreed with them. However, giving up on teacher collaboration to avoid conflict is demonstrating a willingness to give up on the goals that fueled the relationships in the first place, the goals of solving problems of the students, the school, and the teachers themselves (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

The literature also included descriptions of experiences that were unexpected when teachers encountered the process of collaboration (Bush, 2003; Cozart et al., 2003; Johnson, 2003). In one particular example, teachers who had worked with each other for years decided to collaborate to plan a workshop on multiculturalism. They were caught by surprise with the intense impact of the collaborative process even at their very first meeting:

> We were eager to begin, and the fireworks began at our first planning session! Although we have all known each other for several years and have often had discussion about various topics, we were challenged by the differences in our beliefs, assumptions, and styles as we prepared to carry out the eight-day workshop. (Cozart et al., 2003, p. 43)

In spite of good intentions, as values, beliefs, personalities, teaching styles, and other individual factors collided, each participant felt threatened, embarrassed, or angered by the others involved.

However, as Cozart's group (2003) worked their way through the group's collaborative processes and allowed themselves time to reflect upon these events, several of the authors described the dawning of a sense of empowerment and self-knowledge. They described the progress of the group's experience as a spiral path full of challenges, daily reflection, and daily action by each participant. "There was never a day when we did not learn more about ourselves and each other as we planned and led the learning" (p. 43). By pressing past the difficult challenges and discomforts of collaboration, Cozart and her colleagues were able to experience and enjoy many of the benefits of collaboration. They grew and were strengthened by a sense of empowerment, both professionally and personally. In this context, "conflict was healthy and lively" (Bolin, 1989, p. 89). In addition, they reached their goal of designing and implementing

a workshop that proved to be a transformative experience for themselves and the workshop participants.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) differentiated between what may appear to be a collaborative school culture and the authentic kind of collaborative culture that actually leads to school improvement. They described what strong collaborative school cultures should look like to principals and teachers:

> They consist of pervasive qualities, attitudes, and behaviors that run through staff relationships on a moment-by-moment, day-by-day basis. Help, support, trust and openness are at the heart of these relationships. Beneath that, there is a commitment to valuing people as individuals and valuing the groups to which people belong. . . . Failure and uncertainty are not protected and defended, but shared and discussed with a view to gaining help and support. (p. 48)

Productive team members need to be open with each other, able to listen to each person's views, and able to state their opinions or disagree with each other without being intimidated or fearful (Conley & Muncey, 1999). Without "the right balance of politeness, respect, and debate" (Guth, 1997, p. 55), teachers may not be able to learn how to challenge and question one another and to be truthful about their differences. If conflict is poorly handled in a school, teachers will suffer from lower levels of trust, thus making successful collaboration with each other virtually impossible (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

In every organizational change toward improvement and reform and in every human endeavor, conflict and struggle are inevitable (Bellah, 1989). In one particular scenario back in

1857, Frederick Douglass made a poignant statement that those in the field of education would do well to consider:

> If there is not struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation . . . want crops without plowing up the ground. They   want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful   roar of its many waters. (cited in Lieberman & Miller, 1999, p. xi)

Thus, conflict in collaboration is not always something to be feared, but rather something to be embraced as a healthy, learning experience that can lead to growth and new understanding (Bolin, 1989).

Elements and Conditions for Successful Collaboration

To learn to collaborate, teachers need to be willing to open themselves to the qualities of collegiality and to "realize that their own good is connected with other people's good" (Bellah, 1989). When teachers come together to do something that they enjoy, they can develop into their own little communities of celebration. Certain characteristics or elements are conducive to the success, effectiveness, and even enjoyment of teacher collaboration. Many teachers already have the qualities of character, personality traits, and interpersonal skills that make collaborating with colleagues a natural, comfortable process. However, some teachers prefer the independence that isolation in their classrooms provides, and learning to work closely with other teachers may not happen easily for them.

Roland Barth (1990, 2006) stated that when adults share an atmosphere of collegiality in their schools, those adults have the greatest influence on the character and quality of their schools and on their students' accomplishments:

The kind of school that I would like to work in and have my children attend—and the kind of school that I suspect most teachers and principals would like to be associated with—would be a school in which teachers and principals talk with one another about practice, observe one another engaged in daily activities, share their knowledge of their craft with one another, and actively help one another become more skillful. In a collegial school, adults and students are constantly learning because everyone is a staff developer for everyone else. (Barth, 1990, p. 513)

Barth's description of an ideal collegial school is an example which most schools can attain if the right conditions and elements are in place.

The literature of the field describes many elements and conditions necessary for collaborative efforts to be successful. These elements and conditions tend to fall into two major categories: external elements of structures and strategies and internal elements within the participants themselves. This section will first describe some of the external structural and strategic elements necessary to implement successful collaboration within a school, followed by a discussion of internal elements needed by those who want to participate in a successful collaborative process.

The physical elements of the school setting, time and place specifically, affect the quality of teacher collaboration. Typically, "the workplace of the teacher—the school—is not organized to promote inquiry or to build the intellectual capital of the occupation" (Lortie, 1975, p. 56). Shank (2005), however, described one particular school that had a highly collaborative teaching culture due to the fact that groups of teachers who shared a common grade level or group of students also shared a common space and time for planning.

Having a successful, highly collaborative teaching culture would be difficult, if not impossible, without the support of the school's principal. If a principal is trustworthy and values, encourages, and even models collaborative behavior, teachers will be more likely to collaborate among themselves (Clegg, 2004; Sergiovanni, 2005; Shank, 2005; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). If a principal nurtures a school environment of cooperation and caring rather than promoting a culture of favoritism and competition, teachers are more likely to trust each other and enjoy the benefits of collaboration.

If teachers' collaborative relationships are given structural backing by their administration, more robust forms of teacher collaboration can occur, along with more authentic learning and reflective teaching practices (Gitlin, 1999). Structural backing simply means that the necessary time and space to collaborate are incorporated into the school's daily schedule in ways that do not intensify teachers' already busy workloads. This kind of backing could make collaboration more enticing to teachers who may be hesitant to step into the process.

New teachers in particular benefit from working in a school that supports a collaborative culture. Having a common space and time for planning surrounds new teachers with what one new teacher called the "flow of collaborative energy" (Shank, 2005, p. 16). "These everyday structures enable new and veteran teachers to converse about curricular and pedagogical decisions, student learning, administrative logistics, and professional development" (p. 17). The principal also shared, "My experience says that teachers learn most from conversations with other teachers. The greatest staff development happens in those everyday conversations about where they have to go next" (p. 17). Beginning teachers added that the most valued means of

support and learning were the collegial interactions that common workspace, planning time, and tasks made possible.

Building collaborative structures in schools allows for the embedding of professional development and instructional and emotional support for new and veteran teachers in the day-to-day work of teaching (Gilbert, 2005). Schools with a collaborative teaching culture can also provide new and veteran teachers with such benefits as validation of concerns, a gauge to help situate expectations of students in a larger context, and support of colleagues in exploring teaching dilemmas. These benefits expand teachers' repertoires of possible solutions and the implementation of appropriate plans (Shank, 2005).

However, structured collaboration time in a school can become useless, wasted time without a purposeful strategy for using that time effectively. There must be some meaningful activity, agenda, inquiry, or goal to accomplish. Teachers need to have a sense of purpose and know that collaboration with colleagues will impact their own learning and that of their students. One way for teachers to make their collaboration more effective in accomplishing their work is to engage in a strategy that Krovetz and Arriaza (2006) called collaborative action research. In collaborative action research, teachers analyze qualitative and quantitative data about their students "to monitor students' academic progress, identify and calibrate teaching practices, and to inform curricular and policy decisions" (p. 85). Krovetz and Arriaza found that collaborative action fostered a sense of group effort in the teachers, opened their conversations, and generated a deeper level of respect for each other. Thus, well-conducted collaborative action research has the potential to bring out the best in its participants.

An empirical study by Saunders, Goldenberg, and Gallimore (2009) supported the need

for not only administrative backing and time for teacher collaboration built into the daily

schedule, but also the need for a purposeful, consistent focus on improving classroom instruction

and student learning. The authors conducted their study over a period of five years in two

phases. In Phase 1, a two-year focus was placed on principal training to nurture support of and

time for teacher collaboration and yielded no significant differences in student achievement. For

the next three years in Phase 2, the study added the professional development of grade-level

teacher teams to focus intently on improving student learning. As a result, throughout Phase 2

student achievement improved rapidly and significantly.

Other efforts also have teachers focus together on student learning. Numerous examples

of research have used Japanese lesson study, a method of purposeful, collaborative professional

development that began in Japan several decades ago and is gaining popularity in American

schools (Chassels & Melville, 2009; Dennis & O'Hair, 2010). The lesson study process involves

small groups of teachers working collaboratively to observe and analyze live classroom lessons,

to determine lesson effectiveness through examination of student response data, and ultimately to

revise and refine future lessons. Both new and veteran teachers indicated that they benefitted

professionally from their experiences with lesson study. Some of the benefits for the teachers

included a deeper understanding of their curriculum, a deeper level of collegiality, reflection, and

appreciation for colleagues' insights, and an increased personal confidence in lesson planning

and teaching strategies.

Clark (2001) described another example of authentic, focused, purposeful collaboration

in which teachers in different locations and different countries conducted their own "teacher

conversation groups" (p. 172), some over a period of several years. In these self-directed conversation groups teachers talked about every aspect of their careers, including their students, curricula, attitudes, colleagues, professional communities, and each other's expertise. The teachers flourished in these "good conversations . . . in an atmosphere of safety, trust, and care" (p. 176) and experienced transformative growth in their self-confidence, self-esteem, and their professional and reflective practices.

In addition to sufficient time, space, administrative support, and purposeful strategies, certain internal elements of personal character within each teacher must be present for collaborative energy to flow. In one study of four teachers' perspectives regarding teaming and leadership (Conley & Muncey, 1999), one of the participants was asked what skills teachers needed to be productive members of a team. The participant spoke from experience as a head teacher who had held several teacher leadership positions:

> They need good listening skills. They need to be analytical. . . . They need to have
>
> confidence to express opinions and not be afraid to disagree with everybody else . . . to
>
> see things from different points of view. Other than that, they need one more skill, and
>
> that's to see it as a valuable thing that they're doing by being on a team. They need to
>
> value it so that they will put the time into it. (p. 50)

Skills that are necessary for successful collaboration with colleagues may not be intuitively known (York-Barr & Duke, 2004), but teachers who realize the need for and the importance of learning to collaborate can acquire these skills.

Teachers who want to collaborate successfully also need to have three vital ingredients in their collaborative mix: They need to share the same mind set (Bush, 2003), the same goals

(Darling-Hammond, 1997), and the same language (Clark, 2001; Schrage, 1995). Language is "the raw material of collaboration" (Schrage, 1995, p. 68) and the right words at the right time can make a difference. Continual discussion about all aspects of teaching, learning, and evaluating, combined with ongoing professional reading, reflection, sharing, thinking, and collaboration can create meaningful and lasting changes in teaching, learning, and student achievement (Routman, 2002).

Bush (2003) further clarified the importance of collaborative partners having a "collaborative mind-set" (p. 57) that would allow them to succeed in a collegial environment in the school. She framed this mind-set with the concept of metacognition:

The key to metacognition is self-awareness of our individual cognitive or thinking and learning systems. It seems logical that having more knowledge about our own thinking and learning strategies will help us as we work together with others in a collaborative partnership. Making our thought processes explicit requires some metacognitive skills and it is not uncommon for partners to share the genesis of an original idea. (p. 58)

Teachers who practice metacognitive thinking are usually self-aware enough to understand what they know and can more easily share that knowledge with colleagues. Likewise, they may also realize that there is much they do not know and much they could learn from their colleagues.

One critical element evident among collaborating teachers is respect. A prime example of the importance of respect among teachers was demonstrated in the professional development methods of Rodgers (2002). "The formation of a community of respect among teachers is critical to creating an environment for successful reflection as well as successful teaching and learning" (p. 233). To increase such capacity for respect, Rodgers' professional development

experiences for helping teachers collaborate more effectively involved having them practice listening to and intensively reflecting upon each other's classroom experiences. Indeed, "People listen to what someone has to say not necessarily because of the truth being communicated in the message, but because of their respect for the speaker" (Maxwell, 1998, p. 51). When teachers collaborate successfully together, each colleague is considered an equal and a respected leader in his or her own right; therefore, listening respectfully to each other is critical for collaboration to work.

Certain skills necessary in the collaborative process, when continuously practiced, can allow for a culture of respect and trust to emerge (Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006). Teacher leaders involved in collaborative endeavors should ensure that nobody in the group is left out of the process and encourage members of the group to embrace the process as their own. If the endeavor reaches a point in which all members must account for their work, all forms of blame must be removed from the conversation, a process that eliminates avoidance. There must be a mutual understanding by all members of the collaborative team that as they account for their work, the process is for learning purposes only, never for punishment. Clandinin et al., (1993) even extended this line of thinking to the sensitive area of teacher assessment by encouraging teachers to consider assessment as a "sustained conversation, a way of making sense of classroom experiences" (p. 220) within the safety of caring relationships among collaborating teachers.

To form a community of respect among teachers in collaboration, respect for and valuing of each other's differences must be nurtured. Teachers make judgments through the lenses of their own values and experiences. "Values, as we know from psychology, heavily influence our

perceptions of things we experience ourselves, as well as what we perceive and accept in ideas presented by others" (Handal & Lauvas, 1987, p. 12). There are as many different teacher personalities, experiences, and teaching styles as there are teachers. No two are exactly alike. In addition to different teachers' personalities, experiences, and teaching styles, there are differences in cultures, backgrounds, experience, personal beliefs, values, attitudes, gender, and personal ambitions. In such a diverse population of teachers, mere tolerance of each other is not enough. Acceptance of and appreciation for each other's differences are necessary conditions for entering that desirable flow of collaborative engagement.

A clear example of colleagues appreciating each other's differences is the collaborative experience described earlier by Cozart et al., (2003). Five instructors collaborated to develop an eight-day workshop addressing the issues of multiculturalism and the importance of providing culturally sensitive pedagogy to children. In the process they encountered the challenges of accepting and appreciating each other's differences:

> We are equally diverse in our teaching styles, from highly structured, emerging, and in between. We were colleagues and friends, but as we worked to diligently listen and hear each other, we were challenged to put aside previously conceived notions of how things should be; we could not assume we knew how the others felt and we realized we had to focus our thinking to presenting our ideas to each other in ways that were constructive and collaborative. . . . Our differences could have been our downfall. . . . Those very differences were our strength. . . . As we grew in trust of each other and each other's ways, the Institute took shape. (pp. 43-44)

Once the participants overcame their initial shock at the unexpected conflicts of working

together, they went on to describe their collaborative experience as enlightening, challenging,

and even addictive, in spite of, and because of, their many differences.

Within a community of respect, encouraging teachers to share major concerns with each

other could enhance the effectiveness of their collaborative meetings. Having an agenda that

acknowledges any topics, issues, or concerns that need to be addressed by each of the

participants can prevent the meeting from becoming an exercise in futility. Allen (2008)

explained this statement further with the following example:

If there's an "elephant in the room" that no one is willing to acknowledge—some data

that any of the participants has that they know could impact on the subject but they are not

disclosing or admitting it—it will short-circuit optimal   collaboration. (pp. 90-91)

Allen described this process as a cleaning and purging of the "'collaborative psychic RAM'

space" (p. 90) that could enhance the focus, clarity, cooperation, and, ultimately, the

effectiveness of the entire group.

A community of respect among collaborating teachers would not survive without

simultaneously building a community of trust. Creating a climate of trust is a challenging key

element in building a successful collaborative community (Clegg, 2004). In such a group, there

would be a safe give-and-take atmosphere in which the opinions and feelings of all in the group

could be freely expressed and validated without fear of embarrassment or rejection (Cozart et al.,

2003).

In the collaborative process it is inevitable that there will be questioning and criticism of

teacher practices, behaviors that can often be threatening (Johnson, 2003). Teachers in

Johnson's study of collaboration were explicit about the need for honesty and trust in their relationships with each other for "critical collaboration" (p. 345) to occur. In critical collaboration, teachers must feel comfortable with each other to be able to handle challenging remarks from colleagues without taking their comments or questions personally. Otherwise, criticisms will offend, provoke, or silence teachers and make their collaboration ineffective. In an atmosphere of honesty, respect, and trust, teachers find it easier to adapt their thinking in order to accept the questions and criticisms raised by others.

In any school where teachers do not trust each other, teachers doubt each other's intentions, honesty, and confidence, which in turn, impedes their ability to collaborate and learn from each other (Meier, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Developing a community of trust can be a struggle for teachers. Teachers usually learn how to take responsibility for being well-informed and to develop and enjoy the power of their own ideas. A greater challenge lies in learning to be open to the views of others, to talk about sensitive issues, and to disagree with each other in "intellectually useful ways" (Meier, 2002, p. 77). In a community of trust, teachers can learn to handle tough, sensitive issues if substantive, deep discussion is part of the everyday culture.

Teaching requires a special kind of risk-taking trust in people and in processes with many different or even distant colleagues. Hargreaves (2003) defined this special kind of trust as professional trust. Teachers "must learn to trust and value colleagues who are distant and different from them as well as those who are the same" (p. 28). Ultimately, trusting in the processes of teamwork and partnership with people who are distant and different can benefit everyone involved. Nieto's (2003) work with teachers indicated that often their greatest

inspirations came not from books, staff meetings, or outside experts, but from other teachers, including those from distant locations. At times, they even sought opportunities outside their schools to engage with others.

> In spite of the limited time they have on their hands, some teachers join inquiry groups and professional organizations; they attend and participate actively in conferences; they present workshops together; and, in a myriad of other ways, they demonstrate that collegiality is essential for good teaching. For them, having colleagues in whom they can trust is one of the ingredients that keeps them in teaching. (p. 58)

These alternative opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, considered by many to be risky, provided these teachers with the help they needed to sustain their energy and commitment to keep going.

In conclusion, many teachers appreciate and are invigorated by opportunities to share and learn new ideas in collaboration with other teachers. Engaging in collaborative opportunities would be difficult, if not impossible for teachers without the structures of time and place to meet together, along with administrative support. Vivid accounts from schools of teaching and learning in which collaboration is strong, purposeful, and strategic encourage educators to "rediscover the satisfaction and empowerment which derive from the adventures of minds that are freed to think" (Yonemura, 1986, p. 474). Collaborative relationships within communities of respect and trust enable teachers to no longer worry about struggling to voice their own ideas or about defending themselves alone. In an environment of openness, trust, and respect, teachers can freely explore and reflect upon their own professional practices and personal belief systems.

Such an environment empowers teachers to create a collegial atmosphere and to collaboratively build a vibrant community of learners, including themselves and their students.

Future Trends

Schrage (1995) predicted that in the future, "the very idea of collaboration will be redefined along technological dimensions" (p. 183). Effective collaboration takes place in shared space; however, with the use of modern technology, shared space need not be restricted by time or distance. Collaborators can communicate in shared space that exists in a variety of today's media. These technologically shared spaces can become collaborative tools, creating collaborative environments. Such cyberspace environments could provide windows of opportunity for collaborators to experience shared understandings, along with playful curiosity and serendipity, which are "two historically essential ingredients for discovery and innovation" (p. 95). Technological advancements can have the potential to enable teachers and educational leaders to become powerful learners "dynamically plugged into the external expert system" (Fullan, Hill, & Crevola, 2006, p. 95) of other learning environments.

Goerner (2003) suggested that our very survival as a civilization depends on empowering learning at all levels. Our global society and global economy demand high quality human input through timely, flexible, creative collaborations of people with diverse perspectives in order to combine knowledge for problem solving.

Another trend in developing collaborative communities involves the recognition of the value of diverse perspectives. For example, teacher-education programs are being encouraged to provide more opportunities for teachers to learn cultural fluency as they explore multiple, diverse cultural perspectives with each other in multiple contexts (Glazier, 2004). Preservice programs

need to develop and explore authentic learning opportunities in which "majority and minority groups interact with one another in meaningful and long-term ways, potentially in collaborative teaching settings" (p. 628). As a result of collaboration across cultural differences, teachers may be able to explore their own cultural identities and thus become better prepared to work with students who are culturally different from themselves. Consequently, such teachers are likely to establish more equitable and unbiased classroom teaching practices which, in time, could contribute to a more egalitarian society.

Gaps in the Literature

This review of the literature of the field indicated gaps in what is known about teacher collaboration. The gaps divide into two categories: first, the gaps identified explicitly in the literature reviewed—often followed by recommendations for further study—and, second, the gaps identified through the process of reviewing the literature for the present study.

Most schools have an occupational and organizational culture that makes long-term, intensive collaboration difficult to find (Little, 1990b). Specifically, the literature indicated gaps in understanding the efficacy and long-term effects of collaboration and whether or not authentic collaboration actually takes place in most schools (Gable et al., 2004). Ways to assess the effectiveness of teacher collaborations have not been developed. In many cases it is often difficult to determine whether or not teachers teach differently than they did 30 years ago (Cuban, 2001). Furthermore, very little research has been done on the long-term effects of teacher collaboration on the teachers themselves, including their career commitments or orientations (Little, 1990b).

In addition, myths and misunderstandings exist regarding the process of collaboration (Friend, 2000). Unless these myths and misunderstandings are directly addressed, challenged, and clarified, they could "derail current and future efforts to build collaboration as a powerful tool schools can use to achieve their goals" (p. 130). For example, some of the myths and misunderstandings include the beliefs that everyone is collaborating, that more collaboration is better than less, that collaboration is all about feeling good and liking each other, and that it comes naturally. Indeed, in each example, the opposite may be the case.

The field is also unclear regarding effective ways to initiate and establish successful collaboration. Although teachers are being asked to play increasingly important leadership roles in their schools and districts, many feel as though they are flying by the seat of their pants. Because most teachers want to be productive and effective, they need to learn from the voices of other teachers whose capacity for leadership is being built and who are awakening to their own potential as leaders (Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006).

An interesting dichotomy in the literature existed concerning when or how often collaboration should take place. Much of the literature contended that disciplined collaboration at a scheduled time and place is the best way to proceed (Hill & Guthrie, 1999). However, Schrage (1995) asserted that such a disciplined approach to collaboration could make the process just another boring meeting to attend. Rather, collaboration could be most fruitful when done only as needed, and, once the goal was achieved, the collaboration should come to an end. These two views regarding the purposes for collaboration do coexist, however. Given that collaboration is a major means to facilitate professional learning, more research regarding how teachers perceive collaboration operating in their professional lives would inform the profession

in efforts to support successful collaboration. The present study was designed to provide such knowledge.

Research also needs to focus on understanding collaboration as it involves the persons who are collaborating. Indeed, most teachers are creative individuals who mix traditional, habitual practices with innovative ones, but very few have all the interpersonal or social skills necessary to easily become members of robust professional learning communities (Little, 2003). In most educational settings, collaborating teachers' interpersonal styles are often very distinct from each other (Friend, 2000). An investigation of teachers' interpersonal styles of relating to each other in the collaborative process could further the knowledge base by developing valuable principles for successful collaborative practice. Such principles could guide teachers in the refinement of their interpersonal skills and could promote dialogue that brings teachers together "to explore how their unique perspectives can contribute to the creation of better educational services [and thus] experience the extraordinary synergy of collaboration" (Friend, 2000, p. 160).

Finally, the literature indicated that there was a void in our understanding of the importance of trust in the context of schools (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). "School leaders need to better understand the dynamics of trust in order to reap its benefits for greater student achievement . . . . Without trust, it is unlikely that schools can be successful in their efforts to improve" (p. xii). Further studies, both qualitative and quantitative, are needed to explore the role of trust in school leadership, student achievement, and particularly in teachers' professional relationships.

The literature review for this study did not address key concerns of those who attempt to establish collaborative cultures in schools. For example, little discussion was evident regarding

how to manage difficulties, hindrances, and conflicts when they arise and how to salvage

collaboration that has failed. In addition, the literature presented numerous examples of

collaboration's long-term effects on student achievement, but it did not address how teachers

could persevere and maintain long-term collaborative groups as colleagues retired, transferred to

other positions, or left the teaching profession altogether. This study addressed some of these

gaps in what is known about teacher collaboration through examining the knowledge

experienced teachers have developed regarding the complexities of their collaborative

experiences.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework driving this study consisted of several major components.

The diagram below offers a visual representation of how concepts within the framework relate to

each other.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

Need for collaboration to meet the needs of school improvement

Benefits

Characteristics of

Leads to

Shape

Models

Collaboration in schools

Necessary for

Arise from

Complexity

Arise from

Challenges

Teachers' knowledge regarding their experiences with collaboration

Leads to

Increased student learning and school improvement
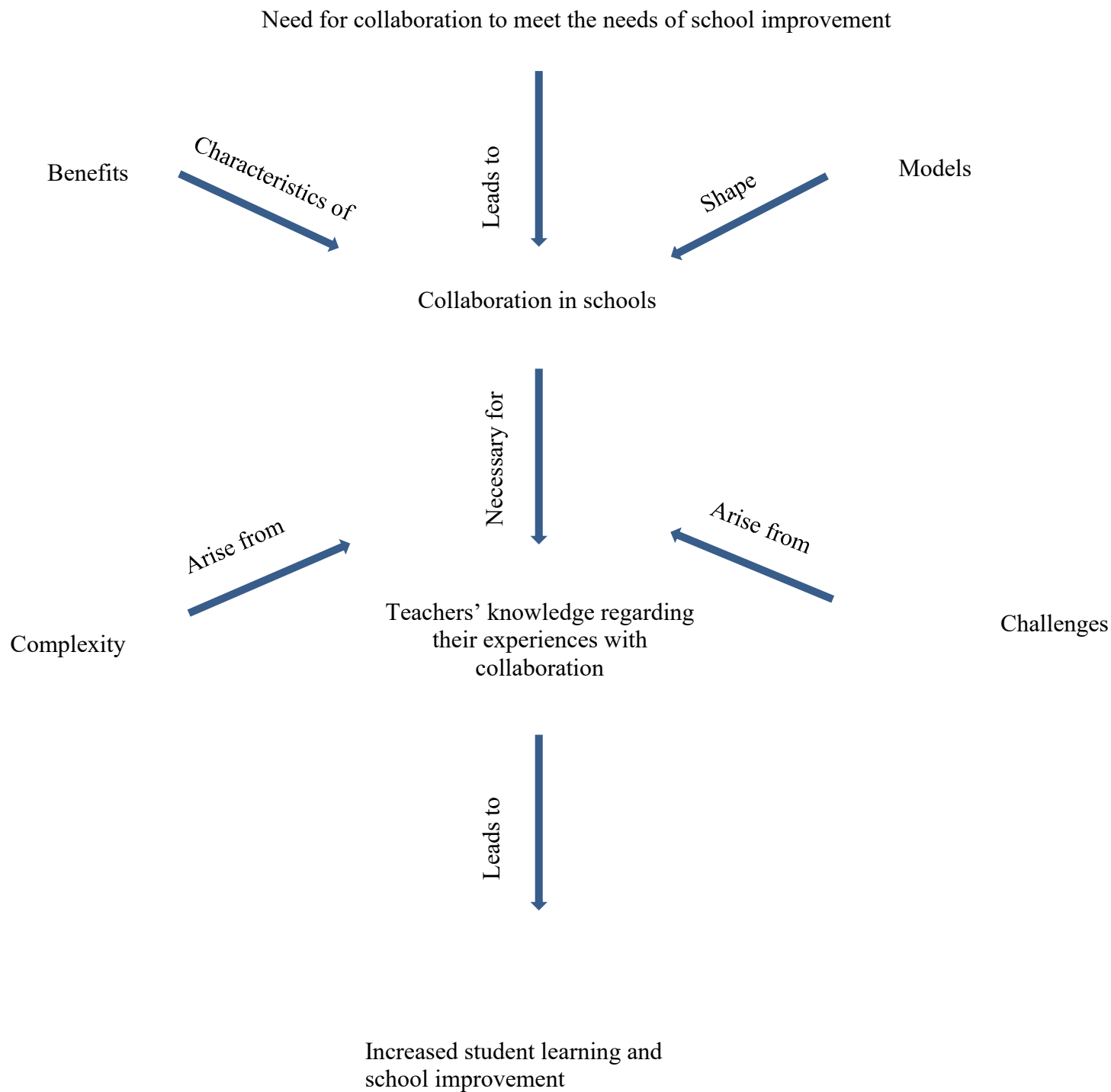
First, the literature recognized that the practice of teacher collaboration in schools has become a necessity for teachers to meet their districts' demands for continual school improvement. Teachers must account for student learning gains in every subject, regardless of the students' backgrounds and ability levels. Changes and challenges in our society make the education of our children much more complex than in the past; thus, the practice of teaching in isolation has become obsolete. Those in the field of education are realizing that the only way to meet the goals of school improvement is to create or to join effective collaborative teams of teachers.

The second major component of the conceptual framework for this study is that the process of collaboration is very complicated and challenging for all its participants, and is far more complex than regularly acknowledged. The literature has recognized that collaboration has highly complex elements both internally and externally. To begin with, collaboration requires administrators and teachers to establish and employ external structures and strategies to support and conduct collaborative meetings. The internal elements of collaboration are even more complex than the external. They include its many advantages and benefits for teachers, students, and schools that result from successful collaborations, and the disadvantages, hindrances, and struggles with conflict that arise in attempts to collaborate. The literature also provided a wealth of knowledge about the internal elements of qualities, social skills, and personal character within the teachers themselves that are necessary for collaboration to succeed.

As collaborative processes have developed in school settings over time, the literature identified various models of collaboration with different characteristics. Each model addressed the differences in the role of expertise, the role of leadership in decision-making, and the degree of equity shared by its members. In two of the models, all members share equal roles of

leadership and expertise. Within these two models, teachers have conceptualized collaboration from the superficial to practice at deeper levels, depending on their willingness to share their time and expertise and to open themselves and their teaching practices to the scrutiny of colleagues. However, the literature warned that in many schools, much of what teachers considered to be collaboration was nothing more than simple conversation.

The literature acknowledged the difficulties of determining the effectiveness of existing collaborative teams. The levels of openness and transparency teachers share with each other to assess their teaching practices and student achievement are known only by the teachers themselves. A major unknown component regarding teacher collaboration is the question of what actually happens inside teachers' collaborations. Therein lay the need and the direction for the present study. The perspectives of teachers who were engaged in continual, intensive collaboration with one or more colleagues in every aspect of their teaching could inform those in education concerning the answer to that question.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Two examined the literature of the field regarding collaboration, including an historical perspective illustrating the potential power of collaboration to effect change in society, along with a description of the role of collaboration in education. The chapter included discussion of how collaboration relates to educational leadership, the various models for collaboration, their levels of complexity, and how collaboration with colleagues can influence the development of teachers' professional identities. The chapter concluded with descriptions of the many benefits and challenges of teacher collaboration, and elements necessary for collaboration to be successful in a school setting.

The literature emphasized several key findings explaining why teacher collaboration is important in schools. By collaborating, teachers can learn, share, and create knowledge regarding best practices, solve problems for themselves and their students, and develop a strong individual and collective voice. Teachers can overcome the negative aspects of collaboration by bringing positive social skills into the process, such as trust and respect. Together, teachers can improve their teaching practices, increase student learning, and promote school improvement. By doing so, teachers can reap many professional and personal rewards, and strengthen their personal and professional identities as effective teachers.

A review of the literature indicated several possible gaps in educators' understandings of collaboration. The literature provided an abundance of information on the advantages and disadvantages of collaboration, but very little was discussed regarding how to actually establish and conduct teacher collaborations at a level and intensity that can result in improved teaching practices, improved student learning, and school improvement. Importantly, the literature provides little description of teachers' perceptions of the process of collaboration. Their knowledge in this domain was the focus of the present study.

Chapter Three provides a description of the research design followed in this qualitative research study, specific methodologies in data collection and data analysis, the process of selecting participants, ethical considerations regarding informed consent, along with procedures that ensured the security of data. In the final portion of Chapter Three, "Researcher as Tool," I share my professional and personal experiences as a teacher learning to collaborate with my own colleagues and explain how these experiences, my connoisseurship (Eisner, 1998) regarding collaboration, likely influenced the research process.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The intention of this study was to gain a better understanding of how teachers in various public elementary schools within one particular school district perceived their experiences of working collaboratively with fellow teachers in their schools. This study sought a deeper understanding of how the collaborative experience affected these teachers in their professional lives. The research question for the study was stated as follows: What are the perceptions held by experienced public elementary-school teachers in a large urban school district in the southeastern United States regarding the collaborative process in educational settings?

In order to answer the research question, a qualitative research design was the most appropriate choice for this study. Qualitative research attempts to understand the world from the perspectives of those living in it and tries to capture and interpret their perceptions of the realities that surround them (Hatch, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Patton, 2002). Qualitative research "values and seeks to discover participants' perspectives on their worlds, views inquiry as an interactive process between the researcher and the participants, is both descriptive and analytic, and relies on people's words and observable behavior as the primary data" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, pp. 7-8). Qualitative inquiry is naturalistic inquiry in that the research takes place in real-world settings (Locke et al., 2000; Patton, 2002). In addition, no attempt is made by the researcher to manipulate the phenomenon of interest. The research question for this study was investigated through qualitative methodology consisting primarily of in-depth interviews along with the examination of any artifacts or documents the participants wanted to share. However, no artifacts or student work were shared by the participants.

Qualitative research operates within the "paradoxes of structure and freedom" (Oldfather & West, 1994, p. 22) by granting the researcher the freedom to be responsive to the context in which the data are gathered and to be unrestricted by rigid rules that prescribe what data to gather (Patton, 2002). However, the researcher must also adhere to the deep structures and the epistemological principles that guide qualitative research processes. Through this methodology the researcher is able to adapt techniques to the circumstances found in the field and to maintain sensitivity to nonverbal aspects of the scenarios in which research is conducted.

The design of qualitative research is open, flexible, and emergent, responsive to changing conditions as the research progresses to permit exploration of whatever the phenomenon under study offers (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). This element of qualitative research is also referred to as "emergent design flexibility" (Patton, 2002, p. 40). Qualitative methodology gives the researcher the opportunity to process data immediately and to clarify and summarize the data as the study evolves (Merriam, 1998). As the researcher's understanding deepens and situations change, the qualitative design permits the following of leads which may appear unexpectedly and enables the pursuit of new paths of discovery as they emerge. In fact, Eisner (1998) encouraged such pursuit and described it as "productive serendipity" (p. 241).

More specifically, the present study used a phenomenological research approach by exploring how teachers perceived and made sense of their lived experiences in collaboration, both individually and collectively (Hatch, 2002; Patton, 2002). Through in-depth interviewing, teachers described how they remembered, interpreted, and felt about their collaborations with other teachers. By thoughtfully responding to open-ended questions, the participating teachers

had opportunities to share their views of the very essence of the phenomenon: collaboration with colleagues.

It is important to note that, in the mid-1970s, Lortie (1975) recognized that the views of teachers had been muted for decades. Teachers rarely had significant opportunities to express their views and be heard. In the more than 40 years since Lortie's observation, those in the field of education have begun to understand that attending to teacher voice could give those who listen the knowledge, insight, and power that teachers possess. However, it should also be noted that, when compared to other high-achieving countries, teachers in the United States still "have limited influence in crucial areas of school decision making" (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009, p. 48). The interviews in this study provided, on a smaller scale, valuable opportunities to recognize the importance of teacher knowledge. Learning about the perspectives and views of teachers and listening to their voices as they described their experiences with successful collaboration contributed to the significance of this study.

The complexity of teachers' collaborative interactions as expressed in their daily lives and the meanings the teachers themselves attribute to these interactions (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) led to the decision to use a qualitative design. The intent of this study was to understand this phenomenon, teacher collaboration, from the participants' perspectives and to understand the meanings teachers have constructed in their efforts to make sense of their work and the experiences they have had in their world (Merriam, 1998).

The characteristics of qualitative research as described above by Eisner (1998), Hatch (2002), Marshall and Rossman (1999, 2016), Merriam (1998), and Patton (2002), and how these characteristics relate to this study fully demonstrate how a qualitative design was the most

suitable research paradigm for the present study. The following sections explain the

methodology that was used for participant and site selection, data collection and analysis, and my

role in being a researcher as tool using my connoisseurship as a public-school teacher

experiencing the collaborative process.

Selection of the Participants and Sites

The sites for this study consisted of several elementary schools located in the Duval

County Public School District in Jacksonville, Florida. This district is the 12th largest school

district in the country in population (United States Census Bureau, 2007, p. 18) and is located in

the state with the 4th highest population in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2007,

p. 17). Given the size of the district and the population of the state, research regarding teachers'

collaborative experiences within schools in this district could be heuristic.

Elementary-school teachers were more advantageous for this study over middle-school or

high-school teachers because the work lives of elementary-school teachers differed from that of

middle- and high-school teachers. Elementary teachers usually had colleagues whose work was

similar to theirs and who allocated their time with a fixed group of students throughout an entire

day (Lortie, 1975). Teachers on the same grade level shared the same curriculum, and those who

co-taught or departmentalized on grade level shared the same students and similar daily

schedules. Therefore, elementary teachers' circumstances made teacher collaboration more

likely to occur. Middle- and high-school teachers' work day consisted of more

compartmentalized and departmentalized instruction with separate classes in rigid time blocks

that were not as conducive to a collaborative environment as an elementary-school setting.

Furthermore, because my personal experience as a teacher has always been in elementary

schools, my own expertise and connoisseurship were more suitable to research regarding elementary settings.

To narrow the focus, I contacted a purposive sample of elementary-education classroom teachers who were either currently or formerly in co-teaching classroom settings. During the 2007-2009 school years, these particular teachers all worked in co-teaching classrooms and participated in the Teacher Mentoring Project at the University of North Florida (UNF) in Jacksonville, Florida. The majority of the participants were regular-education teachers paired together in the same classroom all day, every day. This purposive sample of teachers provided "opportunities for intensive study" (Stake, 2000, p. 446) regarding their collaborative experiences. Because several years had passed since the Teacher Mentoring Project was conducted, some of these teachers were no longer in co-teaching classrooms. However, some of the teachers were teaching in their own individual classrooms, but they still were actively collaborating with colleagues and thus were good candidates for this study. In addition, because these teachers previously participated in the Teacher Mentoring Project as co-teachers, they were still "information rich" (Patton, 2002, p. 40), illuminative, and had insight about the phenomenon of interest, teacher collaboration.

It is important to note that all the participants in this present study had graduated from their universities' teacher education programs and received their teaching certificates before universities began to include fieldwork to develop their students' collaboration and co-teaching skills under university faculty supervision. The Teacher Mentoring Project was the first intensive professional development the participants had received specifically for learning how to collaborate and co-teach.

The sites for this study were elementary schools in which the potential participants were either co-teaching or in which there was intentional, authentic collaboration among teachers who previously were co-teachers in the Co-Teach Project. Thus, these elementary schools were selected because they were the locations in which some of the Teacher Mentoring Project co-teachers currently taught at the time of this study. When this study received institutional and district approval, I contacted the principals of these schools via electronic mail and telephone calls to request their permission to invite the selected teachers to participate in this study. The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Florida required that permission to contact the teachers from the UNF Co-Teach Project be obtained from the principals of the schools where they were then teaching. This phase of the process of recruiting participants for the present study occurred over a five-year period. Once permission was obtained from a given principal, the teachers at that school were invited to participate in the study via email. (See Appendix B) Such schools became the sites because participants were teaching at these schools at the time of data collection.

Some of the teachers worked together in co-teaching settings and had multiple opportunities to collaborate and interact with each other on every aspect of teaching. Others had their own classrooms but were regularly collaborating with colleagues who were either on their grade level or were exceptional education teachers who were working in inclusion classrooms. The present study focused on the teaming or interactive model of collaboration, which was similar in many respects to the self-managed team model described by Smylie et al., (2002). Teachers who were co-teaching and participated in this study met the criteria of the teaming model described earlier in Chapter Two in which both teachers had equal ownership of and

responsibility for their classroom setting and students. In a note of warning, a study by Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2007) indicated that co-teaching classrooms in which there is "true collaboration between two equal partners" (p. 412) may be, for this study, a rare and serendipitous find. However, in the Teacher Mentoring Project, equality existed between the co-teachers in responsibility for instruction and classroom management of their classes in the majority of cases. Whether those characteristics of co-teaching remained in teachers' practice was not explored.

Originally there were over 150 teachers on the list of teachers who participated in the Co-Teach Project. Using the Duval County website, I was able to locate 50 teachers still employed by Duval County and the elementary schools where they taught. The 10 teachers who responded to the electronic letters of invitation were working in different schools, which was even more advantageous for this study. Conducting interviews in several different school sites allowed data collection from a wider variety of teachers working within different school climates and cultures, rather than selecting participants from a single school. A total of 10 teachers in different schools were thus interviewed in the present study, potentially yielding a broader set of perspectives than had the number of schools been limited with the teachers clustered in those few schools. Rubin and Rubin (2005) encouraged researchers to interview individuals who reflected a variety of perspectives; because "reality is complex; to accurately portray that complexity, you need to gather contradictory or overlapping perceptions and nuanced understandings that different individuals hold" (p. 67). Furthermore, because people experience the world in unique ways, learning about teachers' perceptions of the collaborative process from multiple perspectives was a way to examine collaboration from different angles rather than a single one (Eisner, 1998).

To broaden the understanding of the co-teaching settings, one needs to know that co-teaching classrooms may be set up in several different models. One variation is the "special education service-delivery model" (Kloo & Zigmond, 2008, p. 13), also called the inclusion model, in which two certified teachers, usually a regular-classroom teacher and an exceptional-education teacher, share responsibility for planning, delivering, and evaluating their classroom instruction. Students in inclusion classrooms are a diverse group that usually includes several students with disabilities or other special needs (Friend, 2007). In the inclusion model, the special-education teacher is often in the classroom for part of the day and in another inclusion setting the rest of the day.

Another co-teaching model is a classroom in which two regular teachers are co-teaching in the same classroom all day. Regular classroom teachers who were co-teaching in the same classroom and who shared equal responsibilities for every facet of teaching in the classroom were excellent candidates for participating in this study. In such a co-teaching setting, both teachers experienced continual, intensive collaboration with each other, to share in the planning and instructional process, to manage discipline and student learning needs, and to make use of each other's strengths (Friend, 2007; Friend et al. 2010). However, both regular classroom teachers as well as special-education inclusion teachers were likely to collaborate on every aspect of their students' education, component by component, day by day, and were a valuable source of rich, in-depth information through their knowledge and understanding of the collaborative process.

Some of the teachers who participated in this study were no longer in co-teaching classrooms, yet they still frequently participated in what they considered to be successful and

meaningful collaborations with their colleagues. Because such teachers had current, first-hand knowledge of collaboration, both as former co-teachers and as regular classroom teachers at the time of their interviews, they provided a wealth of information and insight and were rich sources of data that shed light on what the literature considered to be less fully understood: the inner workings and interactions of teacher collaboration.

After this study received approval from the University of North Florida's Institutional Review Board, and then the Duval County Public School District, which readily granted permission to conduct the research, I contacted the principals of the selected schools via electronic mail to request their permission to invite some of their teachers to participate in the study (See Appendix D for a copy of the Request for Principal's Permission). When permission was given, this study initiated the process of participant selection by sending electronic letters of invitation to the teachers who were in either co-teaching classrooms or regular classrooms and who participated in the Teacher Mentoring Project which was described earlier. (See Appendix B for a copy of the Participants' Letter of Invitation.) This letter of invitation briefly explained the nature of the present study, provided clarification of what involvement in the study included, and invited qualified teachers to participate. After multiple emailed letters of invitation were sent, selection of participants began with those teachers who did respond to the letters of invitation. Teachers who declined the invitations, or never responded to up to three invitations, were no longer contacted. The teachers who responded affirmatively were contacted, according to their preference—by electronic mail, by telephone, or by text message—in order to arrange a time and place to meet for an interview. Over a period of 18 months, during which recruitment occurred, 11 teachers indicated that they were willing to be interviewed. Because of scheduling

limitations, only 10 of the 11 teachers were interviewed. The interview meetings took place at locations and times chosen by the participants for both convenience and comfort. The locations for the interview meetings were either at the teachers' schools after school hours or in nearby public libraries on Saturday mornings, depending on their preferences.

Participants were selected based on the following criteria: Because those invited to participate were involved in the Teacher Mentoring Project during the 2007-2008 academic year, they had at least a minimum of several years of teaching experience and were no longer novices. In addition, from their descriptions of their teaching contexts, all participants were involved in ongoing collaboration with other teachers. The participants also had clear and immediate access to the complexities of their ongoing collaborative experiences. Teachers who were formerly collaborating in previous years but were no longer engaged in collaboration were no longer qualified to give the rich, in-depth descriptions of the collaborative process that this study demanded. People's perceptions and memories change over time (Schrage, 1995). Thus, to capture the complexities of each participant's perceptions, experiences, opinions, values, and feelings to the fullest extent, current, first-hand engagement and experience in their own collaborations were essential to give this study convincing results (Patton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Several assumptions also operated in the selection of these participants. The participating teachers had to be intellectually engaged in their collaborative process (Eisner, 1998), comfortable with the research methodology that was used in this study (Hatch, 2002), and insightful and articulate about their knowledge (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, the selected

teachers had to be willing to share their experiences, perceptions, opinions, and feelings regarding collaboration as they responded to open-ended interview questions.

The collaboration in which the teachers participated at the time of their interviews were either teacher-initiated, self-managed groups of two or more teachers, or administratively mandated but not supervised or conducted by the administration. If collaboration originated as an administrative mandate, but became teacher-initiated, this condition was acceptable. The collaboration had to be purposeful and task-oriented, including tasks such as sharing information, working on projects, resolving problems or conflicts, encouraging growth, or focusing on teachers helping each other to succeed in the daily work of teaching.

To maintain high ethical standards, this study only conducted interviews with fully informed participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, 2016). Every participant received and signed a copy of an informed consent statement (See Appendix C) approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of North Florida. Each interview began with a review of this information to clarify any questions the participant may have had. Proper procedures were carefully followed through informed consent to make certain that the participating teachers felt completely comfortable and secure with their decisions to participate in this study. They were given full assurance that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Participants also understood that they had the right to withdraw permission to use any or all personal communications if they changed their minds as the study progressed (Hatch, 2002). None of the participants withdrew from the study.

Once transcripts were completed, the participants were given the opportunity to review the transcripts of their own interviews and affirm or alter them as they wished (Patton, 2002).

The participants were contacted by telephone or electronic mail and were asked if they wanted to review their transcripts, or receive a copy of the transcripts, but none wanted to do so. Names of participants and their locations were changed or codified to assure strict confidentiality. The keys to the coding procedures concerning participants' identities and locations were kept in a separate, securely locked location to prevent accidental discovery of their identity.

Data Collection

For data collection, the present study relied primarily on qualitative methods of in-depth, open-ended interviewing of the teachers, in addition to review of any relevant documents or artifacts such as journals, books, or other items the participating teachers wanted to share. In-depth, open-ended interviews with teachers were considered to be a very rich source of information and a powerful resource for learning how the teachers perceived the situations in which they worked (Eisner, 1998). The use of interviews as the primary data collection method in this study was based upon certain assumptions: that the perspectives of the participants were meaningful, that they were knowable, and that the participants were able to make them explicit (Patton, 2002).

Skillful, effective interviewing could accomplish what observation could not. A researcher cannot observe people's feelings, thoughts, and intentions (Merriam, 1998). To learn how people organize the world and attach meanings to what goes on in the world, the most natural approach to that knowledge is to ask them (Patton, 2002). A well-conducted interview has been described by Dexter as a "conversation with a purpose" (as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 71) which can unlock the internal perspective of the interviewee and open new worlds to the interviewer (Patton, 2002). When participants are at ease and talk freely about their points of

view, they are more likely to reveal rich, in-depth descriptions of their perspectives and thus provide a wealth of data for the researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Patton (2002) described three basic approaches to conducting open-ended interviews: the informal conversational interview, the interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview. The most appropriate interview approach for this study was that of the interview guide. In this approach, the questions or issues to be explored in the course of each interview were prepared ahead of time "to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry were pursued with each person interviewed" (p. 343), but the guide also allowed the participants to express their own perceptions, understandings, feelings, insights, and experiences in their own terms. Analysis of their responses revealed the perceptions of these teachers and how they have organized their views while working in collaboration with other teachers. The interview questions, presented in Appendix A, provided a framework and a guide for the interviews.

The interview guide approach provided several advantages in the present study. The interview guide provided a focus on the topics or subject areas to be explored and probed, yet "the interviewer remains free to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style" (Patton, 2002, p. 343). The participants were interviewed systematically and comprehensively because the interviewer had determined in advance the topics to be explored. Furthermore, time was used efficiently, and the interview protocol was easily available for inspection and review.

In-depth interviewing was the primary method for data collection in the present study. In addition, teachers were encouraged to share any of their personal teacher artifacts, such as reflective journals, notes, books, or any other materials that may have had special significance or

relevance to their collaborative experiences. Eisner (1998) suggested that "whatever is relevant for seeing more acutely and understanding more deeply is fair game" (p. 82). By utilizing multiple sources of data gathering, including in-depth interviewing, detailed descriptive notes recorded during the interviews, and examination of documents or artifacts, the present study achieved a fuller understanding and enhanced, credible interpretation of teacher collaboration.

The design and sequencing of the present study's open-ended questions encouraged the participating teachers to draw from their full repertoire of involvement with collaboration as they described their feelings, thoughts, and experiences, and avoided the imposition of predetermined responses on the participants while gathering data (Patton, 2002). The questions permitted the teachers the freedom to express themselves in whatever manner and in whatever direction they wished to take.

The development of the present study's interview questions took into consideration the review of the literature: first, in its identification of multiple interpretations defining collaboration; and second, in its indication where there are areas of sufficient complexity in which there are known, indicated, or perceived gaps in the knowledge base. In this manner the interview questions addressed teachers' perceptions of the collaborative process. These questions helped to determine if there were a shift in their stance, referring to the notion that the literature described the collaborative process as having certain characteristics and features. What these teachers actually said was both similar to and different from what the literature described. The interview questions helped to respond to this uncertainty.

The role of the personal dimension of the researcher is inevitable (Eisner, 1998). As the interviewer, I was the "data gathering instrument" (Hatch, 2002, p. 7), drawing on personal

experience as an elementary-school teacher involved with the collaborative process along with fellow grade-level colleagues. As grade-level colleagues and collaborators, we worked closely to integrate our resources and improve our instructional program. Because there is not an exact, codified body of procedures that instructs one on how to produce a perceptive, insightful, illuminating study of this facet of the educational world, my individual style, strengths, and personal level of educational connoisseurship were guiding factors in the management of the present study (Eisner, 1998).

To enhance and balance connoisseurship in the gathering and analysis of data, the researcher needs to maintain a "participatory mode of consciousness," described by Heshusius (1994) as "the ability to temporarily let go of all preoccupation with self and move into a state of complete attention" (p. 17). Keeping "an attitude of profound openness and receptivity" (p. 16) can prevent personal subjectivity from inappropriately shaping the collection and analysis of data throughout this inquiry (Peshkin, 1988). As an additional measure to maintain balance and transparency, I kept a journal which contained reflections about the participants and settings (Schechter, 2010). Keeping detailed notes and reflections enabled me to remain open and clear throughout the data-gathering process.

An additional approach to qualitative data collection is one in which the researcher commits to adopt a stance of "empathic neutrality" (Patton, 2002, p. 49) throughout each interview experience. Although these two terms appear to be contradictory, the researcher can maintain this stance by being open and neutral to the complex reflections and perspectives of the participants as they emerge in conversations. A special contribution of qualitative inquiry, however, is that it depends on, uses, and enhances the researcher's direct experiences in the

world and insights about those experiences, including learning through empathy. Empathic neutrality allows the researcher to communicate understanding, interest, and caring toward the participants, while maintaining nonjudgmental neutrality toward their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. A stance of empathic neutrality can ultimately guide the researcher to report, interpret, analyze, and draw conclusions from all collected data in a complete, fair, balanced manner.

The data-recording methods in this study included the use of a digital recorder to record the interviews and a notebook in which to take detailed notes describing the interviews, settings, and interactions. However, from time to time, participants shared artifacts to enhance their responses to the interview questions. All the information and details contained in the artifacts were identifiable. These artifacts were private documents that were written by two of the participants and could not "be publicized without breach of confidentiality" (Patton, 2002, p. 294), and, therefore, were not used in the final data analysis. At all times, the use of data-recording methods were an appropriate fit for the setting and the participating teachers' sensitivities, and they were used only with the participating teachers' full consent (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Throughout the entire data collection process, every effort was made to maintain efficient and safe practices for data management that kept all data "intact, complete, organized, and accessible" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 148). To ensure the safety and security of all data collected, the recorded interviews were uploaded on the University of North Florida's secure server under a secure password immediately following the interviews. In addition, all identifiers of the participants were locked in a separate, secure location.

Every attempt was made to transcribe the recordings immediately following the interviews. As the recordings were transcribed, all identifiers within the recorded interviews were either changed to pseudo names or completely removed. After the recordings were transcribed, the recordings were destroyed and the transcripts were made available for participant review. As mentioned earlier, none of the participants wanted to review their transcripts. There were numerous benefits of transcribing interviews promptly (Hatch, 2002). Initial analysis of early interviews shaped the direction of future interviews as the study progressed. Reading completed interviews gave the researcher immediate feedback about the effectiveness of certain questions, prompts, and probes. Early analysis of the initial interviews gave the study a clearer, more specific sense of direction (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Finally, and most importantly, Hatch (2002) warned researchers in qualitative studies not to wait until all interviews were completed to transcribe and analyze the data. Such a delay might reveal "major gaps in the data set of the study after it is too late to do anything about it" (Hatch, 2002, p. 116). Immediately transcribing the interviews and continually conducting preliminary data analysis made it possible to fine-tune the data collection process in order to yield a rich data set.

Data Analysis

One of the most difficult challenges in data analysis is making sense of the massive amounts of data and "communicating the essence of what the data reveal" (Patton, 2002, p. 432). Qualitative research emphasizes the use of inductive thinking and information processing as the researcher takes all the pieces of collected data and searches for "patterns of meaning" (Hatch, 2002, p. 161) within them. In addition, Eisner's (1998) approach to educational criticism provides a structure or framework for data analysis.

Eisner (1998) defined four dimensions of educational criticism—description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics—which provided a structure or a set of tools for organizing and framing analysis of the data collected in the present study. First, providing rich, in-depth descriptions of the participants' interpretations of their experiences, emotions, examples, narratives, histories, stories, and explanations gave the data "nuance, precision, context, and evidence all at the same time" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 40). Richly detailed description of the data gathered could then enable readers of the present study to clearly visualize the nature of collaboration as experienced by the participants, and even to participate vicariously in the events described (Eisner, 1998).

Through careful interpretation of the data collected, Eisner's (1998) second dimension of educational criticism, the data in the present study were contextualized and meaning developed. The process of interviewing participating teachers itself enabled the participants to share how they made sense of their experiences, that is, what collaboration meant to them, how they adapted, and how they viewed what happened to them and around them as they experienced the collaborative process (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Further, my connoisseurship, or "the ability to make fine-grained discriminations among complex and subtle qualities" (Eisner, 1998, p. 63), has influenced data interpretation, based on my more than 30 years of teaching experience. Hansen (2017a) further clarified that "connoisseurship denotes how a person can develop, through extensive experience and reflection, a rich, nuanced feeling for and understanding of a particular activity. This immersion positions the person, in turn, to become an insightful critic of that activity" (p. 9). My experience as a collaborating teacher combined with knowledge of the research process helped in the identification of antecedent factors and provided awareness and

understanding of reasons and meanings that explained and accounted for what was seen and heard in the interviews. Furthermore, this interpretive process also employed constructs from the literature on collaboration and from other literature as appropriate to help make sense of the data.

The third dimension of Eisner's process of educational criticism involved evaluation of the data collected, that is, to appraise whether or not the data contained in the content of the interviews were "educationally virtuous" (Eisner, 1998, p. 100) as applied to teachers' perceptions of collaboration. That is, description and interpretation of the data provided the foundation for making judgments about the educational value of what had been observed and recorded within the context of teachers' perceptions of the collaborative process.

The fourth and final dimension of Eisner's (1998) process of educational criticism is thematics. One of the goals and responsibilities of the qualitative researcher is to identify themes within the data analysis process. Eisner defined themes as recurring, dominant messages arising from data analysis and are "distillations of what has been encountered" (p. 104). Themes are not predetermined, but are derived inductively from the data collected. These thematic structures then provided the "conceptual hubs" (p. 191) around which the researcher could present the findings in written form.

In the present study, analysis of the data began as soon as data were collected from the interviews. Data were examined for patterns or relationships through the use of inductive reasoning. "Findings generated from this process are said to be grounded in the data—generated from the ground up" (Hatch, 2002, p. 10). As patterns of meaning were identified within the data, categories or "frames of analysis" (p. 162) helped to decide how to organize the data for analysis. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) used an analogy to further clarify this process. "You are

not putting together a puzzle, whose picture you already know. You are constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect and examine the parts" (p. 29). The process of Eisner's (1998) educational criticism then served to further structure data analysis. Chapter Four offers further elaboration of the data analysis process.

Researcher as Tool

Since becoming an educator in 1975, I have held several educational positions, particularly in elementary and special education settings. As the researcher and the primary instrument for data collection and analysis in this qualitative study, I exercised my personal "educational connoisseurship," or appreciation of the "complexities, nuances, and subtleties" (Eisner, 1998, p. 68) of aspects of the educational world that were encountered in the present study. Because of my direct experiences as a teacher in the field, the present study depended on, used, and enhanced my knowledge and insights about those experiences in order to carry out the present study so as to contribute to the field of education (Patton, 2002).

My professional experiences influenced the choice of the research topic. At the time I was reading a chapter by Hill and Guthrie (1999) which focused on a new research paradigm for understanding 21st century schooling, I was also experiencing the process of "disciplined collaboration among adults" (p. 516) in my elementary school. We were required to meet regularly with our grade level and one or two members of our administration. Occasionally a consultant would also be in attendance. During these mandated "collaborative" meetings, so-called by the district and administration, we examined and analyzed standardized test scores and data provided by the state and school district. The areas of strengths and weaknesses of the

students we taught in previous years and those students we currently were teaching were thoroughly discussed.

These meetings were a new experience for us as grade-level teachers. We were used to meeting to decide on dates for field trips, or to share where we were in the reading and math curricula. However, we had never met together in a disciplined, critical manner to discuss teacher-made assessments and standardized test scores. Neither had we ever met to analyze data to determine the strengths and weaknesses of our students and, by implication, each other. Our grade-level meetings to discuss information and to "collaborate" became a mixture of agony and ecstasy for each of us. We even began to call our collaborations "clobberations" because at least one of us would always leave the meetings feeling angry, hurt, or humiliated.

Continuation of these painful "collaborations" presented a formidable challenge because we were being pressured to change our fundamental beliefs and practices while in the midst of conducting our everyday business (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2000). We suffered through a period of disequilibrium full of stress, anxiety, and uncertainty as we engaged in making significant changes, not knowing that these changes were about to take a positive turn.

As the year progressed and collaboration continued, a change occurred. We began communicating with each other more openly and honestly on grade level as professionals and as friends. We began to trust each other. As we grew in the process of sharing our knowledge and ideas with each other, we began to "undertake the most intoxicating of intellectual exercises— generating new knowledge together" (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997, p. xix). We started meeting in the halls, on the sidewalks, at lunch, and in each other's rooms spontaneously during the day and after school to discuss our thoughts and ideas on what did and did not work in our

classrooms. We helped each other create new approaches or solutions for instructional and behavioral difficulties. The collaborative process helped to refresh our teaching practices. The "collaborative culture" (Hargreaves, 1994. p. 192) that developed in our working relationships ended our days of teaching in isolation behind closed doors.

We eventually decided to departmentalize as a grade level. This decision meant we would each teach one or two subjects to the entire grade level every day; thus, we would all be responsible for all the students. Our principal trusted us enough to approve our decision. The following year, our collaborations grew to a new intensity. We experienced the empowerment of teacher leadership as a grade level. Even in faculty meetings we had a stronger voice in decisions that concerned our grade level.

At the end of the school year during which we departmentalized, our students' test scores were higher than they had ever been. We believed that collaborating as a grade level to share and learn from each other regarding how to improve our teaching practices raised our level of success in supporting student achievement. Also during this year, we collaborated more closely with the teachers at other grade levels to discuss the strengths and weaknesses the students typically demonstrated as they progressed from grade to grade. This multi-grade collaboration enabled all of us to know how to better prepare our students for each school year. The elements of highly productive schools described by Hill and Guthrie (1999) of "commitment to learning, personal attention to students, and disciplined collaboration among adults" (p. 516) were clearly beneficial to our students and to us as teachers. The many benefits and rewards we experienced, both personally and professionally, made all the challenges and upheavals of the collaborative process worthwhile.

Through my examination of educational literature in connection with the many aspects of collaboration, I have experienced a heightened awareness of and appreciation of the existence and importance of collaboration in so many lives and settings inside and outside the field of education. These examples have confirmed my belief in the effectiveness, the importance, the necessity, and the good of collaboration in the field of education

Chapter Summary

The qualitative research design for the present study used semi-structured, in-depth interviews with teachers who had extensive experience with the collaborative process, either in co-teaching settings or in frequent collaboration with colleagues. Responses to the open-ended interview questions provided a rich data base by allowing the participating teachers to describe and interpret their experiences as they perceived them and to tell their own stories of how collaboration had been a part of their professional lives. Along with the process of educational criticism, (Eisner, 1998), Hatch's (2002) typological analysis, and the review of the literature, interviewing data were carefully analyzed in order to identify recurring messages or themes. Because of the growing importance and necessity of collaboration among teachers, my goal has been to gain a deeper understanding of the collaborative process and, ultimately, an enhancement of the educational process for teachers and their students.

Chapter Four describes, interprets, and evaluates the data gathered from in-depth, open-ended interviewing through which the participants shared their perceptions of their collaborative experiences. Eisner's (1998) concepts of educational connoisseurship and educational criticism provided a framework for data analysis, in addition to using the literature of the field to interpret

the data. Hatch's (2002) typological analysis also helped to organize and guide the data analysis.

Eisner's thematics then identified recurring messages embedded in the data.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of the present study was to understand how experienced teachers who have worked collaboratively with colleagues perceived the collaborative process. Understanding how these teachers who participated in collaboration within their collaborative communities perceived their experiences could provide insight regarding the benefits of collaboration for educators, their students, and their schools. In addition, the results from the present study could suggest how other collaborative communities could implement collaborative efforts successfully.

Because the present study focused on understanding people's experiences, it employed qualitative research techniques to address the research question (Eisner, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Patton, 2002): "What are the perceptions held by experienced public elementary-school teachers in a large urban school district in the southeastern United States regarding the collaborative process in their school settings?" Further, the study employed in-depth, semi-structured interviewing (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Patton, 2002). Thus, teachers were able to provide their perspectives and to share their stories (Patton, 2002). The set of open-ended questions provided a semi-structured framework within which teachers could offer their views on their complex experiences with professional collaboration. In addition, the participants' responses to the open-ended questions provided opportunities for asking probing questions in order to understand more fully the meanings these teachers made of their collaborative experiences (Patton, 2002).

Overview of Data Analysis

Participants from a pool of teachers who participated in the University of North Florida Co-Teach Project in 2007-2009 comprised a purposeful sample for the present study (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). All of the participating teachers were experienced teachers who had participated in the Co-Teach Project for two years. In addition, all of the 10 teachers who agreed to be interviewed responded that they had numerous experiences with collaboration in collaborative communities prior to and following the Co-Teach Project. The quality of the responses and descriptions they shared about their experiences and perceptions of the collaborative process provided thick, rich data for the present study.

As this study began, my personal experiences and the review of the literature influenced my choice of the topic of research. I gave serious consideration to the following statement by Howe and Eisenhart (1990): "It is incumbent upon educational researchers to give careful attention to the value their research questions have for informing educational practice . . . and then to ground their methodology in the nature of these questions" (p. 7). Keeping the literature in mind, and my own experiences with collaboration as a teacher, I developed interview questions to ask the participants in order to collect data. The literature and my experiences also influenced the development of data analysis procedures. More specifically, Eisner's (1998) concepts of educational connoisseurship and educational criticism provided a framework for data analysis in order to understand these teachers' perceptions of their collaborative experiences. Being a teacher with over 20 years of experience with collaboration, as previously mentioned in Chapter Three, my connoisseurship supported the process of understanding and appreciating the value of the data provided in these teachers' interviews. Thus, my experiences with

collaboration in my teaching career and an in-depth review of the educational literature of the field influenced the process of data analysis.

Using qualitative, in-depth interviewing, Eisner's method of educational criticism and analysis, and Hatch's (2002) typological analysis and interpretive analysis, data analysis procedures could meet traditional research criteria of rigor, validity, reliability, believability and "instrumental utility" (Eisner, 1998, p. 39) to the educational community. Indeed, in-depth interviewing was the most appropriate method for "getting at the lived experiences and perspectives" (Hess-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 144) of the participants in this study

Educational connoisseurship led to the use of Eisner's (1998) educational criticism as the primary data analysis approach used in this study, supported by Hatch's (2002) typological analysis and interpretive analysis. Eisner's method of educational criticism includes four dimensions: description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics (Eisner, 1998). In the present study, description can enable the reader to visualize how teachers perceived the process of collaboration in their collaborative communities. The reader can thereby connect vicariously with what the teachers shared regarding their experiences with collaboration and could "know what it would feel like and look like if [they] were there" (p. 89). The second dimension, interpretation of the data, explains the meaning of the data, placing it in context and "providing reasons that account for what has been described" (p. 97). The third dimension of educational criticism is evaluation or discussion of the educational value evident within the description and interpretation of the data. The evaluation dimension involves making value judgments of "what is educationally virtuous" (p. 100) in the data. Evaluation determines whether or not what is described and interpreted reflects what can enhance people's lives. Finally, thematics, or the

fourth dimension of educational criticism, identifies recurring messages embedded within the data that extend beyond the description, interpretation, and evaluation of the data themselves to other situations and experiences.   Description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics thus provided the overall framework for data analysis in the present study.

Despite representing two dimensions of educational criticism, description and interpretation worked together in the discussion of data analysis because description alone is "never adequate without interpretation" (Eisner, 2002, p. 97). Although description focuses on the teachers' stories of their collaborative experiences, interpretation penetrates the surface meanings to explain the context and to interpret their stories. Further, the processes of description and interpretation are "so intertwined they often become one" (Patton, 2002, p. 106).

 Description and interpretation of the data were supported by Hatch's (2002) processes of typological analysis and interpretive analysis. As each interview was being transcribed verbatim, I noticed several patterns within the teachers' conversations and started to develop the patterns into categories (Patton, 2002) or typologies. I then read the completed transcripts in their entirety within a week's time in order to gain a sense of the data as a whole. As I edited the transcripts several times for accuracy, I began to code key ideas within the data. The nature of some of the open-ended research questions influenced the development of the initial five typologies for organizing the data. However, the examination of the data through careful reading and rereading, and discussion with a senior scholar led to the identification of another pattern of potential significance (Hatch, 2002). Most of the participants described how their concepts of themselves as teachers were affected by their collaborative experiences. Thus, the identification of a sixth typology, labeled the development of teachers' professional identities, helped to

organize the data. These six typologies then organized the process of educational criticism for data analysis.

1. Multiple views of collaboration

2. The roles of principals in teacher collaboration

3. Elements necessary for successful collaboration

4. Benefits of collaboration

5. Challenges of collaboration

6. The role of collaboration in the development of teachers' professional identities

Description and Interpretation

This section of data analysis both describes and interprets the data using the typologies of this study to organize the narrative. Patton (2002) explained how "descriptions of experiences and interpretations are so intertwined that they often become one" (p. 106). Hatch (2002) added that, in qualitative research, "interpretation permeates everything that is done" (p. 179). Thus, Eisner's (1998) dimensions of description and interpretation using Hatch's typological and interpretive analyses were engaged simultaneously to describe and interpret the experiences of these professional, experienced teachers as they recalled and described their perspectives regarding collaboration within their collaborative communities. In addition, the data from the interviews provided many thick, rich descriptions of the participant's experiences in the collaborative process, thus, this researcher was reminded of Eisner's suggestion to "be selective in both perception and disclosure. The making of a fine meal does not require the use of everything in the pantry" (p.90). The teachers in the present study, both individually and collectively, could give the reader a view of what collaboration looked like within their schools,

classrooms, and collaborative communities. The following six sections of data analysis and interpretation can provide the reader a meaningful inside look at the experiences of teachers collaborating in their communities.

Typology 1: Multiple Views of Collaboration

Based on the review of the literature, collaboration can be defined as educators planning and working together with colleagues to reach a common goal, improve teaching practices, and foster student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Fullan, 2016; Hargreaves, 1994; Sahlberg, 2015; Shamberger & Friend, 2013). When asked "What does collaboration mean to you?" each participant described her understanding of collaboration using some form of the above definition. Most of these teachers were from different schools and did not know each other, but their concepts of collaboration were very similar. Some participants focused more intently on different parts of the definition of collaboration, depending on what was more important to them in their daily teaching practices. All participants recognized planning or working together as central to collaboration. In addition, all participants included comments about how collaboration improved teacher learning or teacher practice.

The following examples of several teachers' definitions of collaboration demonstrated how well they understood three major purposes of planning and working together in collaboration; to reach common goals, to improve teaching practices, and to improve student learning: Deborah shared her understanding that "collaboration to me is working together with everyone having equal input and advantage. That everybody is helping in trying to make everyone's job easier." Linda described its meaning as "the literal working together, like synergy, bouncing ideas off of each other, like getting ideas from other people, weaving those

into my ideas, and making them mine, and vice-versa." Donna explained that, to her, it meant "working together, trying to come to some common ground between all the people on your grade level with their ideas and finding out what is going to be best overall for your students." Kelly considered collaboration to be "critical. . . . It's definitely about talking about curriculum, talking about learning strategies that work for kids." Throughout all the interviews, the teachers' descriptions of their experiences with collaboration wove a detailed, rich picture of how each one perceived the process of collaboration around their own definitions and within their teaching practices.

Participants in collaborative communities

Collaboration takes place in a variety of settings where teachers work together, formally or informally, within different organizational frameworks. For example, collaboration can be an intense all-day process between two co-teachers in which the teachers can communicate at any moment of the day and use different models of co-teaching to present their lessons throughout the day (Cook & Friend, 2000). Alternatively, two or more teachers within self-contained classrooms can informally collaborate as frequently as they choose. Collaboration across grade levels and collaborative teams within grade levels can also provide more formal opportunities to collaborate, usually at mutually agreed upon times.

A co-teaching classroom is itself designed as a setting in which teachers practice different models and levels of collaboration (Cook & Friend, 2000; Friend & Cook, 2013). Amy began her teaching career in an urban school where most of her students were, as she called them, "kids in crisis, like seriously. I mean teachers were going home crying daily." Amy described how she co-taught successfully with another teacher for eight years.

Over the years, it's just people talking that has been what's really shaped me and my

former co-teacher for so long. I mean, the fact that we were together for so long, and had

that opportunity in the classroom to talk all day, and fix things and change things, that has

made the biggest difference. . . .We were bouncing ideas off each other, calling each

other at home, it was great!

In addition to her co-teach partner, Amy relied heavily on the school's reading and math coaches

for more formal guidance and training in how to teach her struggling students. "They would

come in and talk with us, and they knew that I was new, and they would come in and show me

how to teach. Those people were amazing." Amy benefitted from all the forms of collaboration

she experienced, including her co-teach partner, the coaches who worked with her, along with a

very supportive principal.

Kelly had previously co-taught but was, at the time of her interview, an exceptional

education teacher who had her own classroom. At times, she worked with regular education

teachers within inclusion settings, but most of the time it became necessary for her to pull her

fifth grade special needs students out of their regular classrooms into her classroom for more

intensive instruction. However, frequent informal collaboration with grade-level colleagues

continued to be a priority for her. She described what it was like to work with all the teachers on

her grade level at her school.

We have always built on that collaboration piece. . . . together toward a common purpose

at the end. So it's essential . . . and it's valuable and critical to work as a teacher. . . . My

experiences have been very strong in that area of building relationships and working

collaboratively. An open door policy is what we've always had here, so sharing is a

natural part of our culture and environment, and collaborating with each other to improve

our practice as educators.

Indeed, as her interview took place, Kelly modeled her open-door policy and sharing

environment as various teachers on her grade level frequently entered her room to borrow or

return teaching materials. Their sense of camaraderie was evident in their nonverbal and positive

comments to Kelly.

Linda had co-taught very successfully with her former partner for years, but, at the time

of her interview, had her own inclusion class with several special-needs students and a full-time

assistant. She defined her concept of collaboration as "synergy."

I think it's the literal working together, like synergy, bouncing ideas off of each other,

like getting ideas from other people, weaving those into my ideas and making them mine,

and vice versa. . . . One person can't make the whole group do well. It takes the whole

group. And I viewed collaboration the same way. Like, if we had to work together in the

same room, we had to work together. One of us couldn't do all the work and the other

one sit down all day. It didn't work that way.

Linda began every school year by teaching her students from Covey's *The Seven Habits of*

Happy Kids (2008)*.* She mentioned that her favorite chapter focused on "working together, and

[Covey's] definition for that is synergy." Linda felt the same way as Kelly about sharing

frequently with colleagues. She referred to it as "hallway" or "sidewalk" collaborations:

Sometimes we just collaborate in a hallway, I'll walk around and say, "Hey, what are you

doing?" Or, "Oh, that's a great idea! Why didn't I think of that? That'll be mine today."

Sometimes it helps to say it out loud to someone else.

Collaboration such as Kelly and Linda described could be very informal or spontaneous, and a very natural part of a teacher's day. Such collaborative opportunities did not always have to be scheduled with a formal agenda, and could provide ideas, help, and inspiration in a brief moment of time.

Working in more formal teams by subject area was how Donna collaborated within her grade level. At her school, her grade level was fully departmentalized. They had a math and science team and an ELA team (English and Language Arts). Donna was part of the math and science team.

> Math and science teachers all collaborate. We have a required once-a-week meeting that we attend, but we usually get together more often than that, because, you know, 45 minutes is not enough to do anything. We meet probably three times a week where we get together and discuss, "Alright, what are we doing next week? What lessons are we doing? How do we want to teach them? What assessments are we giving?" So we collaborate a lot.

Donna was adamant about how important it was to work together with all the people on her grade level in order to establish agreement regarding what was going to be best overall for their students. She stated, "I think it works so much better when you do have teachers who come and say, 'Here's all the stuff we have, let's look at it and find what's the best,' and then commit to it." Donna's grade level team of teachers were willing to make this commitment with her.

Previously, Kelly described how important her frequent informal meetings with her grade level teachers were to her. However, Kelly provided additional examples of how she collaborated on a more formal basis. She taught fifth grade and worked with special-needs

students placed in inclusion classes. Thus, she frequently met with all of her regular education teachers, both formally and informally, for a variety of purposes, all of which she said were critical.

> So there is a grade level meeting which is more business associated. There's content meetings that the teachers of general education have that are specific, because we do departmentalize after the third grade, where the collaboration is just for the subject area that we're teaching. Then we have our own special education meetings where we just collaborate on our specific topics related to kids that have disabilities. So all of these meetings occur every single week and are really important for the connectedness of what we're doing. So we can share things, and, for special education, it's more sharing of ideas and how to deal with certain situations that are unique. But, with the others, it's definitely about talking about curriculum, talking about learning strategies that work for kids. So each one of those meetings is critical.

Kelly and her colleagues knew they had to meet frequently to strategize ways to insure their students' success. Darling-Hammond (2010) named "collaboration associated with a professional community of teachers as a key element of successful schools" (p. 261). Kelly and her grade level understood the importance of such frequent collaboration.

Different organizational frameworks

Teachers can collaborate together with educational specialists within different organizational frameworks. A coaching cycle provides one structure in which collaboration can occur. Coaching cycles are highly effective professional development experiences that provide ongoing professional learning for teachers, and is very similar to what occurs in Japanese lesson

studies (Bush, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2008b, 2010). A coaching cycle is an appropriate

setting in which grade levels can collaborate at a much deeper level than teachers usually

practice on their own (DuFour, 2004). Reading and math coaches are specifically trained and

hired by the district to conduct coaching cycles with several schools. A coaching cycle follows a

certain process in which a team of teachers, usually by grade level, spends several days working

closely together with a reading or math coach in one subject area. For example, teachers may

develop lessons to teach a particular district or state level standard in reading or math, and then

write the lesson plans out in detail. After every step is agreed upon, each teacher in the group

takes a turn teaching one of the lessons while the other teachers observe and take notes. The

teachers and coach meet together after each lesson and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of

the lesson presentation and the students' responses. "Group members unpack, dissect,

investigate, digest, contemplate, ponder, reflect, share, elicit, adjust, and grow together. Lessons

are used as food for thought" (Bush, 2003, p. 53). This process, along with the guidance of the

coach, helps the group to determine what worked and what did not. The group makes

adjustments to the lesson plans, and the next teacher then teaches the next lesson. This process

can be a very intimidating experience for teachers who have their own self-contained classrooms

and are not used to having colleagues observe and critique their teaching practices.

Some participants who were co-teachers enjoyed coaching cycles because they were used

to teaching lessons in front of their co-teach partners. Amy explained how one of the coaching

cycles she attended had such a good effect on her teaching methods.

Our coach was great. She had an agenda, we all got to speak, and we had a journal we

kept notes in. We asked each other questions, we had to make a project, and we made an

entire unit for science. We had to watch each other and take notes, and, it was funny, some of the teachers were really, really uncomfortable; they were very shy, and we'd say, "You teach all day long in front of all these kids," but it's different when it's your peers. . . . But I felt like I learned so much from going into their rooms and having to watch, and being forced to take notes on them, because it really made me sit back and think.

Fullan, Hill, and Crevola (2006) considered professional learning opportunities like coaching cycles to be a "crucial element" to improve teaching and learning in schools by giving teachers "opportunities for the team to debrief and reflect on teachers' practice and progress" (p. 94). Participants in this study who had experienced coaching cycles appreciated what they learned through the debriefings and reflections on their practices. They described themselves as better teachers because of those experiences.

Another formal structure for collaboration is the Response to Intervention meeting. The Response to Intervention Program (RtI) is a federal program that provides a structure for collaboration among teachers who need to bring more intensive or formal interventions into their classrooms for their students who need additional support. RtI is a school-wide framework for instruction that is available for all students. Teachers collaborate with teams of specialists within RtI meetings to determine if their students who require more support may even have specific learning disabilities. These groups of teachers and specialists develop strategies to support students who are struggling academically or behaviorally, or both. If the strategies don't succeed, then the teachers and specialists hold additional meetings to develop more intensive strategies, such as individualized or small group lessons, to give these students more help in achieving learning goals. Terry described her experience with the RtI process of collaborating.

So there's that team of people, me, speech and language pathologist, the ESE teacher, the guidance counselor, we all have to meet and decide, "OK, does this child need to continue in ESE?" So there's a lot of collaboration in that situation as well, because obviously I know the child differently from the speech pathologist, the ESE teacher, and the guidance counselor. So getting together to discuss all the details and specific areas that we need to look at for those kids is a huge collaboration, and I'm very thankful that I've had that experience for 3 years now.

Terry appreciated the expertise of the specialists involved in her RtI experiences because they helped her to help her students increase their success in learning. The collaborative process allowed this team to develop plans to meet the needs of each of her students who needed additional help to succeed.

Although collaboration takes on different forms and functions in the minds and practices of teachers, the teacher participants in the present study perceived collaboration within their collaborative communities as vitally important, whether their community included one other teacher, a co-teacher, a group of teachers, or a combination of teachers and specialists.

The collaborative process among teachers in schools would not be nearly as effective without the sustained support, guidance, and leadership of their principals (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Elmore, 2006; Sahlberg, 2015). The following Typology 2 discusses how important the roles of principals are in teachers' collaborative communities.

Typology 2: The Roles of Principals in Teacher Collaboration

Participants described how administrative support for and encouragement of collaboration were critical for teacher collaboration to take place and to succeed. Indeed, the

literature of the field supports principals and teachers collaborating with each other and even considers them professionally obligated to seek and implement best practices in their schools together (DuFour, 2003; Johnson, 2003; Starratt, 2004). Principals thus can be key players in building collaborative cultures and in helping to establish a sense of unity as a caring community within their schools (Hargreaves, 1994; Johnson, 2003). Hargreaves and Boyle (2015) described this process as "uplifting leadership. . . a journey that people pursue together to be part of something greater than themselves" (p. 44). In addition, because the literature describes official functions of principals to motivate staff, to organize, and to facilitate change (Blasé & Blasé, 1999), principals' support of teacher collaboration can be seen as furthering such efforts.

Kelly described how the principal fostered a collaborative culture within her school, considered as one of the best schools in the district. Her principal consistently established and maintained a collaborative culture in the school year after year. To begin with, Kelly described the celebrations and meetings the principal had with the teachers even before the school year began.

> We have meetings together even before the year starts, where we can get to know our new team members, and all of that collaboration starts to build the relationship that we have throughout the year. And, then, it's really a non-stop number of events throughout the year to keep that momentum going because that's important to always continue.

Kelly saw how these events throughout the school year were instrumental in building the school's collaborative culture. Planning meetings and events regularly, along with consistently keeping lines of communication open all year, can be challenging. Conflicts and problems of all kinds can arise and interfere with unity and progress within the school (Johnson, 2003). Kelly

saw the collaborative culture of her school as supporting the teachers and enabling them to minimize "stress" and "strain" in order to come back together to move forward. Smith, Wilson, and Corbett (2009) described conditions in schools that can sustain strong collaborative communities and "provide stimulating and safe learning environments" (p. 25): a supportive culture among colleagues; time to meet, especially more extended blocks of time; satisfying processes of focused communication and equal opportunities to be heard; voluntary participation by teachers; strong principal support; and a skillful "cadre of facilitators" (p. 24) and coaches. Kelly understood and appreciated her experience with these positive, nurturing conditions in her school.

An important element to building a collaborative culture is how principals decide to assign teaching responsibilities. If a school has implemented a co-teaching model, administrators need to consider teachers' personalities and their expectations of each other as much as possible when identifying co-teaching partners (Friend, 2007). Linda described how her principal handled the selection of her co-teach partner. All of the kindergarten classrooms were overcrowded and needed to become co-teach classrooms, so Linda had to choose which one she wanted.

> The principal let me walk around for a half day in every classroom in the grade level;
> then, at the end, she kind of threw me under the bus and said, "Pick who you'd like to
> teach with."

Linda expressed how awkward that moment was for her because all the teachers were in the room with her, but she knew exactly whom to pick after spending time with all of that grade level's teachers. Linda explained why she chose this particular teacher. "I just liked her style in

the room, and I liked her nature, and she did things I wished I was able to do, and I had to learn from her how to do it." Linda stated that she and her co-teacher had a very challenging class that year, and her partner taught her many effective strategies that she could use to manage difficult student behaviors. Linda explained in greater detail.

> You'd find children on top of the tables and I'd use my "Mom voice" and that was the
> only trick I had in my pocket, and it was loud and it was abrasive. So my partner would
> take me aside and say, "You can't yell. You have to try something else. You can hear
> you in the hallway." So I needed to learn something different, so she would take me
> aside and give me alternatives to add to my pocket of tricks.

Because the principal allowed Linda to choose the co-teaching partner she preferred, Linda was able to learn how to do everything she wished she could do, and much more. Their first year together is when they participated in the Co-Teach Project. Linda said, "That was actually one of the coolest things we did. We learn all the different ways that co-teachers can teach, and all the different co-teaching methods." In the years since that co-teaching class, Linda has enjoyed a high level of confidence in her ability to teach, and a sense of freedom to continually learn more ideas from all of her grade-level colleagues.

In a similar fashion, Jackie was introduced by her principal to several teachers who were going to co-teach. After meeting them, she was instructed to choose a partner. Jackie knew whom to choose because she found out that one of her choices had asked the principal to let her be the one.

Of course I'd want to co-teach with the person who wants to co-teach with me, duh, no

one wants to go where they're not wanted. Maybe I'd be invigorated by somebody new. .

. . She and I were a match together, a match made in heaven.

Jackie's principal made a wise decision by letting Jackie and her new co-teach partner choose

each other.

One of Jackie's co-teaching partnerships worked out so well that the two teachers stayed

together for seven years. A metaphor in the literature of the field has, on occasion, referred to

co-teach dyads as "marriages" due to the time and care necessary to build, nurture, and sustain

relationships among co-teaching teams (Friend, 2007; Kohler-Evans, 2006; Tomlinson, 2016). If

a principal arranges a co-teaching classroom without considering the personalities and

expectations of the teachers involved, that arrangement, like an arranged marriage, may not be

successful. Some principals are reluctant to even try to set up co-teaching programs in their

schools (Friend). A better way to set up co-teach partnerships is for principals to let the teachers

themselves choose their co-teachers.

In addition to supporting a collaborative culture in a school, principals can encourage

teachers' efforts to consistently collaborate with each other by providing clear expectations

regarding the process. Donna described her principal's expectations.

One year we got a new principal, and he was into collaboration a lot. He stood up and

said, "This is how it's going to be. This is what I expect, and I expect you to work

together. I want to see common lessons and common assessments." So that was the

expectation. So we would sit and do that, and I thought that was fantastic.

Donna's principal also expected the teacher leaders to report important points of discussions and any questions the groups may have had for him when teachers met to work collaboratively. Throughout the school year, the principal reiterated his expectations with the faculty; teachers continued to meet by grade levels and to work collaboratively together, thus keeping lines of communication open among themselves and with the principal all year.

Donna added that her principal's expectations for ongoing teacher collaboration combined with follow-up communication with him were an effective way to keep the lines of communication consistently open in the school. Darling-Hammond (2008a) emphasized that communication is necessary for sustaining a collaborative community within a school.

Linda appreciated how her principal established the norm of deliberately keeping lines of communication open in school-wide meetings, rather than just in specific grade-level meetings. "We can give [the principal] feedback, like, 'Hey, we're struggling with this,' or, 'Could you help us out with that?'"

Jackie had formerly been a reading coach, ESE teacher, and co-teacher, but was a regular classroom teacher at the time of the interview. She worked at a school that had experienced the turnover of nine principals in 15 years. Such rapid succession of leadership can bring many challenges to the faculty, especially regarding their expectations and environmental norms, which must be clearly established to continue the smooth operations of a school (Hart, 1987). However, of the nine principals, one of Jackie's favorite principals valued and promoted collaboration, and encouraged the teachers to collaborate on a regular basis. This principal encouraged the teachers to work together to learn best practices from each other.

The principal at that time said that if we really want to collaborate, then we need to get into each other's classrooms and see what we're doing, and create lessons together collaboratively, and have a coaching cycle, taking turns teaching. Then you come back and debrief about that, and then the next person teaches.

Heibert, Gallimore, & Stigler (2002) encouraged teachers to work together to learn best practices from each other, building a practitioners' knowledge base in their school to help each other improve their teaching practices in their classrooms. Jackie was thankful to finally have a principal who promoted these practices.

In addition to scheduling coaching cycles for selected grade levels, Jackie's principal also understood how necessary it was to set aside the time during school hours for such cycles to take place, so teachers could collaborate regularly within their grade levels. Elementary school principals have learned the general practice of how to make common planning time available to teachers by scheduling resource classes, such as music, art, and physical education classes, at the same time by grade levels. For example, if all fourth-grade classes had resource classes at the same time, this would allow all fourth grade teachers some time to collaborate with each other during the school day. Principals can also reserve time on teacher planning days for teachers to collaborate with each other.

Participants focused on how collaboration sessions were enriched by the knowledge they gained when attending professional conferences. Teachers who engage in continual professional development have more expertise to give when collaborating and sharing new knowledge with colleagues. Principals can support this professional development by encouraging and supporting teachers' participation in educational conferences (DuFour, 2003). These teachers can then share

what they have learned with their colleagues and collaborate in greater depth within their grade levels regarding how to incorporate their new learning into their lessons.

Kelly and several of her colleagues enthusiastically volunteered to attend as many educational conferences as her principal and available finances would allow. "Every year we'd go to national conferences and our principal supported that work; anytime there's a learning experience, we get together and learn new ideas, and then share and talk about them." Collaborating and sharing what she and the other teachers had learned at conferences was Kelly's favorite way to enrich her own professional knowledge and that of her colleagues.

When educational conferences or funds to attend conferences were not available, teachers described how their principals encouraged professional development within their own schools by initiating or supporting book studies. Book studies can provide professional development during which faculty on every grade level could read and discuss professional texts, selected by either the principal, a reading coach, or the teachers themselves. There are numerous professional development books that can benefit most every grade level.

Kelly described how one book study led to school-wide discussion and professional learning.

> We all had to read a book on attention deficit disorders that we thought was certainly valuable enough that everyone needed it. And that was great professional learning. Everyone was reading this same book, and it changed their whole world of thinking to have that book study and to meet and talk about what strategies that we could use just for that one incident of disability which is so prominent in every single classroom. I think that it changed the lives of so many kids because we did that.

From Kelly's point of view, such professional development, supported by the principal, led to increased collaboration for the benefit of student learning.

Another way that the principals of the teachers in this study supported them was to trust the teachers as they worked with colleagues to enrich the district curriculum with a variety of experiences for their students. One of the greatest gifts principals can give to their teachers is trust (Owens, 1998). Anrig (2015) pointed out how "research consistently finds that a high degree of trust between administrators and teachers is an essential ingredient in making successful schools tick" (p. 33). When teachers are encouraged to brainstorm and share their ideas and best practices of how to improve student learning, the art and craft of teaching can flourish (Sahlberg, 2015). Teachers need their principals to trust them as they collaborate about how to best teach, enrich, and assess lessons in the curriculum.

Several of the participants in this study described how their principals trusted them enough to allow them to add units or lessons that were not part of the district's curriculum. For example, the principal of Terry's school gave permission to the teachers to do "author studies."[1] She recalled how teachers discussed various authors and what they were going to do. "You could see the enthusiasm for teaching just skyrocket." Terry added, "Our principal said, 'You guys are all good teachers, as long as you're using the curriculum, anything else you want to supplement it with, I'm fine with that.'" Kelly appreciated her principal's trust in the school's teachers: "We are huge fans here of the workshop model, and our leadership has been very supportive of doing that because we are hopefully doing what's right for kids."

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[1] An author study is a unit lesson in which students study several books by one author to delve deeply into an author's life and body of work (www.adlit.org/authorstudy).

One of Frances's favorite scenarios describing her principal's trust in and support of teachers involved a math unit.

> The math side was wanting to do something different with fractions. They were creating a zoo to teach perimeter and area. So we asked [the principal] in and told her what we wanted to do. We had a field trip to the zoo coming up, so we had all our ducks in a row, and we wanted to do something different from what the curriculum was. So, that would be a question for her, "Was this ok?" We'd always have our reasons ready. "Here's what we want to persuade you with." Usually she's open. She's very good about letting us do what we need, and lets us do numerous things outside of the curriculum.

Terry, Kelly, and Frances were openly appreciative of the trust given to them by their principals as they collaborated with colleagues to enrich the curriculum.

As stated earlier, principals can be key players in building collaborative cultures and in helping to establish a sense of unity as a caring, collaborative community within their schools. However, principals can have a negative effect on their school cultures through various ways, including attempts to micro-manage the school community. In addition, Blasé and Blasé (1999) warned that, "As schools become more collaborative, collegial, and democratic, they can become more political" (p. 350). They may show favoritism or fail to consider the special challenges faced by co-teachers in their classrooms. Such actions by principals can challenge, hinder, and discourage collegiality among teachers, create power struggles, and even cause collaborative teams to dissolve (Johnson, 2003).

Barbara had a negative experience when her principal favored another teacher at one time in her career and said,

In case there is favoritism, teachers tend to do their own thing rather than try to

collaborate together. . . . I find myself at grade levels [meetings], I never open my mouth.

Once in a great while, but usually I'm shot down. There's somebody else that has a better idea.

I just kind of hide my ideas. It's a shame because they   could really learn a lot.

Barbara lost all interest in trying to collaborate with her grade level because her input was no

longer valued.

Favoritism can also cause less vocal faculty members to be fearful of punitive decisions if

they do not comply (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Deborah described how she previously had a

difficult year with her co-teacher. She believed that she was punished by her principal when she

asked for a self-contained classroom the next year because she was sent to a portable, even

though there were several classrooms available within the main building. To make matters

worse, the co-teacher she left ended up sullying her name by making false accusations. Deborah

described the experience this way:

She told people that I stole from her, that I didn't do any work in the classroom, it was

horrible, and I was a relatively new teacher. It hurt a lot. I was a very   enthusiastic teacher,

[but] that was construed as me trying to make everyone else   look bad. . . . It made it very

hard for me to trust people, because the people that were so mean were the people that I thought

were my friends. So it did a lot of   damage to me as a teacher. It took me a long time to feel

like I deserved to be   respected by other teachers.

When asked how she worked her way back to being more self-assured, she first gave credit to

her students' parents.

The parents here are extremely involved, and they tend to know what's going on. Parents at the end of the year [I co-taught] said, "I'm sorry you had such a rough year." I never said anything to them, but they were all aware that it was not going well. . . . So the longer I taught, I thought, you know, I am pretty good at what I do, and I've built a good relationship with my families, and I can stand on my own two feet. I quit worrying so much about what other people thought.

It took Deborah several years to repair the damage done to her reputation and be able to trust any colleagues again. But she said that she learned a lot from that experience and was a stronger teacher for it. Deborah learned to think independently from the negative influences of her grade level and principal. Her independence helped her become a teacher leader when she moved to a different grade level. Her colleagues trusted her and elected her to be the grade-level chair. After her change of grade level, Deborah relied only on her colleagues and she did not mention her principal anymore.

Most of the participants had a positive relationship with their principals, however, every participant preferred the principal's role to be kept at a minimum if principals were present in teacher-led meetings. Otherwise they felt such meetings could become mini-faculty meetings rather than collaborative discussions. When given the opportunity to talk to faculty, principals may attempt to use this time to talk as "a potential instrument of control" (Gronn, 1983, p. 1). Linda described how her assistant principal would direct most of the common planning time. "We don't get a lot of collaboration out of common planning time. The district put these stupid videos out, and we had to sit there for 45 minutes and watch it. That was our common planning." Frances added, "[The principal] has it planned out what we have to collaborate about. We have a

pretty good administration, but it is nice to just sit down and talk together with our grade level."

The issue was that the principal was in charge of the agenda, not the teachers. Such common

planning times had no room for planning.

Sometimes [the principal's] prolonged presence in teachers' collaborative discussions can

put pressure on teachers to speak out, hoping to put themselves in a more favorable position than

the other teachers in the meetings. Terry observed such situations "where people have just

spoken to make themselves look good. You could tell that they didn't care about what

everybody else said, or if you took their idea, they just wanted to look good." On the other hand,

Jackie described how frustrating it was when her principal frequently listened to one outspoken

teacher without seeking input from, or listening to, the other teachers on the grade level. Jackie

and her colleagues would later ask each other, "Why is that girl making all the decisions for

everybody?" In this situation, the principal and one dominant teacher were leading the meeting

without soliciting opinions from the rest of the teachers in attendance.

When there is a frequent turnover of principals, faculty members have found the

uncertainty of these leadership changes to be frustrating, intimidating, or upsetting (Hart, 1987).

Frequent principal changes also led to confusion among faculty members in collaborative groups

and the possibility of deterioration of existing collaborative groups. Donna described the

problem this way:

> When the principal leaves, then we're back to square one again. . . . It's like everything
>
> disappears every time we get a new principal. It's done a job on our collaborations as far
>
> as grade levels go, and the expectations, not every grade level collaborates even now,

even though they're supposed to be. Everybody brings their [lessons and materials], and

you look at it, then you take it back and you do what you want to do.

Donna saw the lack of consistency as a step in the wrong direction concerning the quality of

teaching in collaboration with colleagues.

The participating teachers in this present study had extensive experience with their

collaborative communities. They knew what made collaboration successful and unsuccessful.

The teachers clearly described elements that were needed to make collaboration beneficial and

successful to every teacher. These descriptions are shared in Typology 3: Elements necessary

for successful collaboration.

Typology 3: Elements Necessary for Successful Collaboration

The literature of the field offers advice for what elements are needed to have successful

collaboration in schools (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Friend, 2000; 2007; Johnson, 2003). Many

of these elements parallel those which Barth (1990) identified as components evident in a "good

school" (p. 512)—a community of learners, with adult relationships that are "cooperative and

collegial" (p. 513), with every teacher constantly learning from each other. The value of such

relationships was evident. In a study of pre-service teachers' perceptions of collaboration and

co-teaching within their university's fieldwork practicum, Ricci et al. (2017) described how the

preservice educators frequently discussed how important it was to them to develop "a good

relationship with their co-teachers" (p. 695). To them, a good relationship was a key element to

their co-teaching success. These future teachers also felt that "the university fieldwork in

collaboration and co-teaching led to their personal growth as teachers" (p. 696).

Participants in the present study described key elements necessary for successful collaboration, without hesitation, and some participants named additional elements that they still needed or wanted to experience to make collaboration more effective and rewarding for themselves and their colleagues. Their descriptions addressed elements necessary to not only collaborate within a grade level, across classrooms, or as co-teachers, but, more importantly, to actually establish and sustain a culture of schoolwide collaboration. Under the umbrella of what was necessary for a culture of collaboration, categories included: processes to follow in collaboration, teachers' characteristics, ways of communication, and supportive actions that an observer would likely see in a collaborative culture. The sections which follow describe these categories in more detail.

Processes to follow in collaboration

One element that the participants identified as necessary for the process of successful collaboration was setting goals. Amy stressed several times how important it was to set goals in order to accomplish something and not waste time.

> I think it's important to have the goal in mind in the beginning, so you can come back to it at the end and say, "OK, did we just chat or did we really get our job done?" I think you want everyone to feel like they at least accomplished something. Maybe you didn't always get your voice heard, . . . but you shouldn't feel like it was a waste of time. Either you listened and learned something, or you learned "I don't want to be that way."

Amy added that because teachers' schedules are so full and time is so limited, collaboration must be constructive. "I enjoy getting to know my colleagues, but . . . walking out of collaborations, you want to be better than when you went in there, because if not, what's the point of

collaborating?" Elmore (2006) supported the necessity for establishing goals by stating that "collegial support and professional development in schools are unlikely to have any effect in improvement of practice and performance if they are not connected to a coherent set of goals that give direction and meaning to learning and collegiality" (p. 60). For these teachers, achieving goals was central to successful collaboration.

In addition to setting goals in the process of collaboration, several teachers added how practical it is to have an agenda determined ahead of time and a note-taker to record what was discussed and decided in each meeting in terms of the goals the group might have set. Barbara wished her grade level meetings would have an agenda "to let people know what they're speaking about and what they want input on ahead of time, because we never do that." Whether there was a note-taker in her meetings or not, Barbara liked to take her own notes. "If I hear an idea or something that I can use, I'm writing it down. I guess I've done that all the way through my career. If there's an idea that I really like, I'll remember it." She realized that keeping records could be useful in future collaborative efforts.

Another important element to collaborating successfully identified by the participants is to have the opportunity to experience at least one coaching cycle. In a coaching cycle, teachers establish goals, work from an agenda, develop lesson plans, and observe each other teach the lessons they developed together. After each observation the teachers debrief and critique what went well and what did not, then try to determine how to improve their teaching practices for the next observation. The coaching cycle pushes teachers into a greater depth of collaboration than the usual practice (DuFour, 2004). These observations and debriefings can be very stressful for the teacher who is teaching the lesson in front of her peers, but Amy was very positive as she

described how much she learned and reflected on her own teaching practices as a result of her experience.

> She [the coach] had an agenda, we all got to speak, we had a journal we kept notes in, we asked each other questions, we had to make a project, and we made an entire unit for science. Everyone that was in our coaching cycle was just kind to the heart, down to the core, and there was nobody difficult in that group. But, I felt like I learned so much from going into their rooms and having to watch and being forced to take notes on them, because it really made me sit back and think, well, wow, they had a hard time and I might do that as well.

Amy added that if there had been anyone difficult or mean-spirited in that group, "those people who were nervous wouldn't have felt as open." The qualities of character in teachers who collaborate play a large part in the success of collaboration.

Teachers' characteristics

All participants in this study had no trouble naming important characteristics teachers need in order to have positive, effective, constructive collaboration with colleagues. Terry believed that mutual respect among colleagues helped collaboration to work so much better. Barbara said, "You have to be open because that's how you learn. How did I get to where I am today? You have to listen to other people and you do learn from other people." Kelly had a more expanded list of necessary characteristics teachers should have in order to collaborate successfully, especially within groups of teachers working by grade levels or teams.

> Teachers need to get outside of themselves, and that's a process for some people to get outside of themselves. To be willing to share, and you have to have a mindset of growth

and cooperation, not of competition. We have to be all really wanting to have a common

goal and not to say, "I'm going to be the best." If you have that, then you're not really

working as a team, and it has to be a team effort toward a purpose.

Kelly's high expectations of her collaborative colleagues matched Goerner's (2003) statement

that "high-value collaborations are no place for people who have a puffed-up sense of

importance or who have a need to control" (p. 356). Kelly focused on the team achieving goals

without the complication of competitiveness with her colleagues.

Jackie added further insight about how important it is to value each other, especially

when working with larger groups of teachers:

In the bigger setting when you're collaborating with four or seven people around a grade

level table, you have to value and accept and respect that everybody is a teacher just like

you, whether it's first year or seventh year or tenth year, they're still teachers, so there's

something they can offer.

Jackie believed in the importance of teachers staying mindful of what is best for the students and

each other as educators, especially in larger groups of teachers involved in the collaborative

process. Teachers must stay mindful of collaboration's "potential and pitfalls. . . it can be

sustained only through professionals' deliberate use of appropriate knowledge and skills"

(Friend, 2000, p. 131). Jackie concluded that, "When you look at a professional learning

community, the whole objective is teaching and learning and growing."

Frances and Donna shared similar elements which they considered to be essential to

successful collaboration. They both stated that teachers needed to be good listeners who are

open, flexible, and willing to change. Donna described how flexibility and willingness to change

can be a particularly challenging, even painful aspect of collaborating.

> Flexibility, a willingness to give and take, and not be offended if people don't like what
>
> you present, what you put out there. Recognize that there might be better ways, or better
>
> materials that you can use. Willingness to give up something for the good, even though if
>
> you feel like, no, this is really good, this is perfect, and somebody else has a new idea, be
>
> willing to give it a try.

Donna knew that teachers find it difficult to have to give up favorite educational activities in

order to work together for the common good. "People are rarely passive in reaction to pressure

on their values and ways of life" (Hansen, 2017b, p. 207). A willingness to change may require

teachers to let go of favorite materials and favorite ways of teaching that they highly value, a

difficult but necessary element of the learning process in collaborative communities.

From the perspective of the participants, teacher characteristics that are necessary for

successful collaboration include having an attitude of respect for each other, a willingness to

listen to each other, and enough patience to accept a give and take of ideas and materials.

Teachers need to have the determination, willingness, and stamina to work together to reach

common goals, to improve their teaching practices, and to help increase their students' learning.

Ways of communicating in collaboration

Kelly described how she and her colleagues frequently observed each other teaching

lessons and gave each other feedback that was empowering and non-threatening.

> We do it in a way that is non-threatening, and we say if we really do see something that
>
> we liked, and what are things we think would be really great to add. So it's not, "Oh

well, you did this lousy, you did that lousy." We always presented it in a way to each

other that it's empowering to improve our teaching practice, and honestly, I think that's

the best way of improving our teaching practice, to have your colleagues share and give

you insights and ideas, because you don't just get that otherwise.

Kelly and her colleagues trusted each other and respected each other's strengths in their teaching

abilities. Leithwood & Azah (2016) stated that "trust lubricates the connections among groups

or individuals in a densely connected network of relationships" (p. 46). Because of the trust and

respect Kelly and her colleagues had for each other, they all appreciated how the sharing of

feedback from colleagues could improve their teaching abilities and, ultimately, their students'

learning.

Terry described how much she enjoyed when colleagues encouraged each other to share

ideas to use. "If somebody says, 'Hey, I used your idea and it worked,' to really acknowledge

that, that's a huge win for [collaboration]." She recalled a time when she was struggling in her

teaching and went to a colleague for help.

I know in the past when I've struggled with a subject, maybe a certain piece of reading or

math, and I know someone's a little stronger in that, or I heard through the grapevine that

somebody did a really great lesson, I may go to them and ask them, "How did you do

this? I'm trying it this way, and it's just not working. My kids aren't getting this." They

say, "Well, I did this," and they show me, then I can bring it back, and that's a great way

to be able to affect your children, positively getting them to be able to understand what

you're teaching.

Amy experienced something with her co-teacher that was similar to Terry's experience of drawing on the strengths of her colleagues.

> I was watching [my co-teacher] teach the writing and I remember thinking, oh, I'm so
> glad she took the lead with writing. She was so much better than me, "Oh, my gosh! I
> would have never said it like that, I would never had introduced it like that," and I
> learned from her.

As the participants described the ways they communicated in collaboration, Amy, Kelly, and Terry emphasized how they relied on their colleagues to give them honest feedback, to share their strengths, and to share their knowledge of best teaching practices with each other. The literature agrees that teacher conversations support teachers' informal learning and, ultimately, the development of collegial communities (Horn, 2010).

Michelle pointed out how necessary it was to have a good team, and to be teachable, ask for help, and ask questions. She stated, "We really learn from each other more than from a book." Further, Kelly believed that "asking for help is never a bad thing. It's not asking for help that is." Linda felt strongly about teachers, especially new teachers, asking for help in every area they need support. She made these recommendations:

> Make a list. What do you need to know? What are you struggling with? Bring your
> ideas to the table, but ask them what ideas you need from them, especially a first year
> teacher. Like, "I don't know how to do math centers. Somebody help me. I don't know
> how to do guided reading, somebody help me." Bring a list. Ask, "What do you do for
> that? How do you track it?"

Open communication is a key element for teachers to have successful collaboration with their peers.

In most classrooms, open communication is necessary between teachers, especially co-teachers, about problems that arise in a classroom setting. Preservice teachers identified how challenging it was to adjust to their co-teachers' personalities, especially when they didn't see eye to eye on things, didn't share the same goals, or had difficulty reaching a compromise (Ricci et al., 2017). Jackie referred to such communications as "those five-minute hard conversations." In fact, she learned to be pre-emptive by developing a list of "non-negotiables" with her co-teacher.

> You have to share and come to that common ground, what can you live with? What would make you go home crying or furious? So our number one non-negotiable was, which is my advice to everybody that co-teaches is, be willing to have the five-minute hard conversation instead of sucking it up for five weeks and having five months of misery, because the five-minute conversation that's really hard and really hurts would be a lot shorter and easier to repair than five weeks of pushing it down and five months of pushing it down.

Jackie admitted that there were times when she and her favorite co-teacher, who eventually became her best friend, had to have some of those five-minute hard conversations on several occasions.

On a final note about ways to communicate in collaboration, Kelly talked about how much teachers were using technology and social media to communicate with each other, but it didn't compare with being face to face with her colleagues.

Blogging has become a popular thing and technology is great, but when you actually talk

to people, it can't be replaced. In my mind, it doesn't replace the actual one on one,

seeing people, and talking with people, that interaction is just invaluable because you get

a reinforcement of things that you're feeling, the frustrations and celebrations. All

teachers go through difficult parents and difficult kids, so having someone to just rely on,

that if we didn't have that release, what would we do? It's a critical thing to just have

that moral support of somebody that's working.

In a survey study by Leithwood (2019), respondents "considered face-to-face meetings to be by

far the ideal form of interaction, [and] encouraged 'more authentic' conversations" (p. 188).

Talking face to face and having that personal moral support from colleagues can never truly be

replaced by technology or social media.

Establishing a collaborative culture

When a school has a strong collaborative culture in which teachers are committed to

work together for a common cause, conditions are right for continuous professional learning

(Fullan, 2016). "The teachers who got the greatest gains for their students worked with peers

regularly to improve what they were doing and what they could learn from each other" (p. 46).

The group improved individuals more readily than individuals can improve the group. The

majority of teachers want more constructive feedback and professional learning, "but only if it is

connected to their growth and implementation of improved practices" (p. 47). "Continuous, job-

embedded learning for educators" (Melasalmi & Husu, 2019, p. 91) is a key to increased student

learning and school improvement. Most of the participants in this present study agreed with the

need for a school to have a strong collaborative culture. Those who taught in schools with strong collaborative cultures appreciated how fortunate they were.

As the participants in the present study shared their perceptions regarding their collaborative experiences, whether recent or years ago, most of them described how collaborating with their colleagues produced multiple benefits. The next section presents Typology 4: Benefits of Collaboration.

Typology 4: Benefits of Collaboration

The benefits for teachers working together within their collaborative communities can be significant. Indeed, the sociologist, Robert Bellah (1989), urged people in education, politics, religion, and all walks of life, to find a sense of community, or "the public good" (p. 283).

> The public good is something that we move toward together, in conversation. . . . I think people do learn, and they do realize that their own good is connected with other people's good. We can overcome this "me first" attitude. . . . The first big job is thinking and understanding, and that means talking together. (p. 280)

Kelly agreed with how important it is to "do things that are for the greater good and common good."

Further, Bellah's concept of community, thinking, and talking with others for a common good suggests that working with others, or collaborating, can lead to problem solving. In supporting collaboration among teachers, the ability to problem solve can also be strengthened when teachers view each other as allies (Houghton, 2001). To problem solve with others, we need their support. In doing so, we can "have an impact on the system of education or the schools in which we teach . . . [and thus become] great teachers" (p. 707). To support novice

teachers in particular, Nieto (2009) encouraged them to "make a friend . . . when teacher develop allies, they remain fresh, committed, and hopeful" (p. 12) in working through their early years.

The literature of the field has stated that, in spite of some opposition to collaboration, "professional collaboration as a whole has a record of indirect, long term, yet clear and positive effects on teachers and students" (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2017, p. 74). Collaboration thus enables professionals to work together to improve practice for the benefit of students.

Kohler-Evans (2006) wrote about the many benefits co-teaching can provide if the all-important administrative support is in place, and teachers are willing to work closely with each other in co-teach relationships. Kohler-Evans shared these thoughts:

> The practice of co-teaching has the potential to be a wonderful strategy for meeting the needs of all students. Working in partnership with another teacher, bouncing ideas off of one another, planning and orchestrating the perfect lesson, having two pair of eyes and four hands, creating something that is better than that which each partner brings …what better way is there to teach? (p. 263)

The years Tomlinson (2016) co-taught with a favorite colleague were her best. She described the times when they planned together at school, "we were more focused and efficient than we were when we worked alone. . . . [we] magnified each other's successes and minimized each other's failures" (p. 90).

Participants in the present study described many benefits resulting from their collaboration with colleagues. A number of these benefits were repeated by several teachers. Examination of this list led to an organization of the benefits under four categories: school culture; teacher support; teacher learning; and student learning.

School culture

The literature of the field has much to say about collaborative cultures within schools. Schools that have a strong collaborative culture likely have principals who are effective as facilitators of their teachers' success and "participate in shaping the culture of learning" (Fullan, 2016, p. 46). In addition, collaborative cultures were found in teacher relationships that were "characterized by trust, mutual support, openness about problems, celebration of successes, allowances for difficulties that colleagues sometimes experienced in their personal lives, and general sense of interdependence that was found in teamwork, collective effort, and shared responsibility" (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2017, p. 77). Furthermore, schools with "more collaborative cultures were associated with greater effectiveness in student outcomes" (p. 75).

Barth (2006) described four indicators he looked for in schools that gave evidence of a collegial or collaborative culture. The indicators he expected to see were educators talking with one another about practice, sharing their craft knowledge, observing each other teach, and cheering each other's success (p. 11). If Barth were to visit Kelly's school, he would probably observe all four indicators. Kelly's school was well known in the district for having an extraordinarily strong collaborative culture. She was very positive about every aspect of her teaching experiences at her school. When asked about her collaborative experiences, she stated,

> I have learned that [collaboration] is the biggest part of this job. The best way to get
> better, the best way to survive, the best way to do all the right things for kids is to have
> that collaboration with others, and I learned that it's a positive experience with others so
> that we can work in one place and do things that are for the greater good and common
> good, that's important.

Kelly recognized that some new members of the teaching staff may not always fit in with the established culture.

> I honestly think that when you get a powerful culture going and a mindset of everyone
> involved is in a growth mindset, that those people tend to stay pretty quiet. They don't
> like to speak up about that. That's good and is the peer pressure of the job. So, yeah
> there have been people along the way. Usually they don't end up staying here long.
> They're not in the right place, they're not a good fit. So they end up moving to another
> school and don't care for it. But along the way for most people, I think that they jump
> into that culture and they see the benefits of it and they end up loving it.

Kelly's school-wide strong collaborative culture could maintain its school's vitality as staff members changed over the years.

Deborah's school did not have as strong a collaborative culture as Kelly's did, but Deborah recognized that the school climate in several grade levels was definitely supportive of grade-level collaboration. She described how much she enjoyed team teaching with a colleague in third grade. They worked well together and were willing to be flexible with each other when necessary to provide extra time when one of them needed more time to work with a student who needed more help. Her experiences with the fourth grade team in her school were even better.

> The fourth grade team, we worked very closely together. Our ELA [English Language
> Arts] team, we collaborated very well, we all shared. A very close team. . . . It was
> probably the best team that I've ever worked with, as far as us collaborating well,
> because everyone was willing to share.

Deborah and Kelly appreciated how much they and their colleagues valued working with each other in collaboration. They knew the importance of having a growth mindset and sharing with each other. They also knew from personal experience and talking with teachers from other schools that this was not always the case.

Teacher support

For a school to be considered a community, it would contain "adults and students who care about, look after, and root for one another and who work together for the good of the whole, in times of need and in times of celebration" (Barth, 2002, p. 11). The participants in this study described how much the support of their colleagues meant to them. Amy shared how collaboration helped her and her colleagues get through difficult times.

> I feel like even if collaboration doesn't give you the answer that you're looking for, or you don't accomplish what you wanted to get done, at least it lets you be heard, and it's like a mental thing. You just feel like, okay, other people are in the same spot I am. This stinks and we're going to get through it together. . . . I think talking with people and brainstorming with them, even if you don't end up doing it right, I think it makes you feel like it's okay.

Amy felt that there was safety in numbers when trying to navigate through new curriculum. She understood the importance of connecting with others who struggled, so that each teacher would know that "you're not alone." She described a time when she supported her co-teacher, who was a new teacher struggling to get through a difficult lesson.

> With a new teacher, we had to develop some of our lessons, so I'd walk out and say, "It's falling apart," and she would say, "It's falling apart, I feel it." I'd say, "Just keep going

because you need to feel it fall apart, just let it happen. We'll throw the papers in the recycling bin." I feel like that kind of collaboration is really important for someone who's starting out, to have someone that they can fail in front of and then come back to the drawing table.

Amy knew how important it was for a new teacher to be able to make mistakes and learn from them, figure out what went wrong, and try again. Even experienced teachers know that what they do may not always work. Teachers realize that teaching is a demanding career, but they learn more together in a community of supportive educators.

Having the support of other colleagues' knowledge and experience, described as "practitioner knowledge" (Hiebert, Gallimore & Stigler, 2002, p. 6) was vital to the participants in this study. In addition, more formal professional development was usually desirable and helpful, but it did not replace having that richness and usefulness of "detailed, concrete, and specific knowledge" (p. 6) from colleagues to address specific problems of practice rather than the decontextualized knowledge that often defines pre-packaged professional development sessions.

Kelly shared that she and her colleagues respected each other's strengths, helped build up each other's areas of weakness, and supported each other in times of frustration.

We try to step back and respect our strengths, and that's a good thing, and work together and building up the areas that are not our strengths. So for me, I love that I have a group of teachers, especially, that I work with in inclusion that bring sanity to my world and ideas on which I need as a special educator, because there are frustrations at times. So, when you get to the end of the rope, and I don't know what else to do, they bring new and

fresh ideas and are willing to say, "Why don't we try this?" or "Let me give you a break

from this student or that student, and really that's just invaluable, and I do that as well for

them.

Kelly added how important the support of her colleagues meant especially when she was

working with special-needs students in her fifth grade class.

All my special education colleagues know all about [these students], so I get a lot of

benefits from that, and they make it a lot easier because I can go to them at any time and

ask, "Okay, what do you think I should do?"

Having the support of colleagues and their background knowledge of her special education

students helped Kelly meet her students' needs and made Kelly's job much easier.

Teacher learning

The participants in the present study shared examples of teacher learning with their co-

teachers during the Co-Teach Project of 2007-2009. Terry began as a new teacher co-teaching

with a very experienced teacher, and she was worried about what she was supposed to do.

I knew that this teacher knew what she was doing. She is one of the most phenomenal

teachers. And, so walking into that, I was a little bit intimidated. So when we joined up

doing this project through UNF, it really gave us elements to focus on, and it gave me a

direction. Okay, being in this co-teach situation, how do I do this? I was coming into her

classroom, her territory, and she was very open to my ideas. . . . We needed to let [the

professors] know what practices are we doing, how are we teaching this as a co-teach.

There were specific areas that forced us to really sit down and reflect on our own

teaching, and how we were working together.

Through this project, Terry and her co-teacher valued learning together more than they would have done had they been working in separate classrooms.

Donna described how the Co-Teach Project helped teachers in many different settings learn how to collaborate with each other, whether they considered themselves to be experts at co-teaching, or whether they were just put together by their principals and had no idea what to do.

Two [teachers] were there, and they were saying, "We were just thrown together." I think that helped them to see, because we did a lot of talking about how you do things, and the different types of co-teach classrooms you can have. So I think that project opened our eyes a little bit to the possibilities. My colleague and I always wanted to do everything together when we taught kindergarten, so that one person could take over for the other person. The professional development helped us see other ways you could co-teach.

Donna added that the project helped her and her co-teacher work out an area of communication that, she admitted, had been troublesome in their relationship.

I remember sometimes that the other teachers would come up to me and ask me a question, and I would speak for my colleague saying, "Oh yeah, that's fine, we'll do it like that." Then I'd go back and tell her, and she'd say, "Why'd you say that? I didn't want to do that!"

Donna explained how the participants in the project had to have lots of open and honest conversations with each other and do a lot of reflecting and journaling. Although she found journaling to be uncomfortable, it helped her to better understand her co-teacher. "My colleague loves to reflect. She's a big philosopher. I'm more of a 'let's just do it and move on.'"

Although the personalities of Donna and her co-teacher seemed very different, she described their partnership as "a marriage made in heaven."

Student learning

Teachers can clearly benefit from the collaborative process, but students can also benefit from their teachers' involvement in collaboration with each other. Amy shared that students seeing teachers working together and talking with each other throughout the day was a good thing.

> I think it was so good for [our students] to see two people who are being positive and friendly, and sometimes we would disagree, and they would know. Then we'd say to each other, "We'll talk.". . . So sometimes they saw us disagreeing, and sometimes I'd say, "The co-teacher got it, she won," and there'd be a jokingness with us. I feel like that is so important for them to see, because we're trying to model for them.

In this example, Amy and her co-teacher were not only modeling how to solve problems in math or reading. They were modeling how to solve problems in life. These students were ones who were so often in crisis. Many of them came from homes where there were many problems, and learning how to solve disagreements peacefully or with a sense of humor was a new experience for the students.

Amy described another situation in which she collaborated immediately with her co-teacher and a new ESE teacher about a student who had just become violently angry and destructive in class. The student thought the teachers were talking about him and how much they hated him. Amy clarified with the student that they were talking about a plan to help him. She told him,

"That's what we do. That's what teachers do." I think it was so good for him to see,

"Oh, here's three people who are holding me accountable, but they were working for me.

All three of them were working on a way for me to not get in trouble."

Being able to collaborate immediately about the incident allowed Amy and her two colleagues to

demonstrate to the student that he had a lot of help and support from his teachers. The three

teachers talking together provided an example to him of how people could work together to help

him in a positive way.

The participants in the present study provided numerous examples of how collaborating

with colleagues helped them to find ways to increase their students' academic learning. During

one assessment period, Terry and her colleagues talked about certain misunderstandings held by

students in her grade level. Terry decided to use humor to see if her students had those same

misunderstandings.

I wondered how many of my students were having that [same misunderstanding] so I

could go back in and clear that up. I shared, "You know, one kid said this about that,"

and the kids would start laughing. Then I asked, "Well, how many of you thought that,

too?" Several raised their hands.

As a result, Terry realized that she needed to reteach that lesson in a way that helped her students

understand content more accurately. In addition, the students were given an opportunity to

recognize where they were having misunderstandings in certain academic areas.

In a similar fashion, Jackie and her co-teacher often role-played to teach math and

reading lessons. One would be the teacher, the other would pretend to be a student who was

making mistakes or misunderstanding the content being taught. Jackie explained how they role-

played a few of these kinds of lessons.

> I would ask, "When I'm using my 10 cubes, am I supposed to have 10 all the time?"
>
> Because I'm seeing that the students are not doing it correctly, so then I'll ask the
>
> questions that the kids are not [asking]. So that's how we keep the collaboration and the
>
> co-teach and the modeling going.

In reading, Jackie would read aloud, then her co-teacher would role-play the student who was

thinking out loud, to help their students comprehend what was being read. After that, they would

break into small groups and continue teaching. Jackie believed that this method of modeling

helped to make the content clearer to the students.

> Linda and her co-teacher also role-played, but they added humor to the process. They

anticipated the mistakes their students could make, then added those into their presentation. One

teacher would make the mistakes and tell the class to do the silliest things. The teacher playing a

student would say, "Ms. B, what's wrong with you?" The kids would be laughing at us, but it

kept the kids engaged. As a result, when the students were intensely focused on what was being

taught, they made better grades on their assessments.

> Donna explained how she felt about collaboration in general and how the collaborative

process affected her students' learning.

> Through collaboration I have learned to take in other ideas. . . . You get much better
>
> work. You get better work from your students, you'll teach better. I don't see too many

drawbacks about it as far as the student side goes. They're getting the benefit of however

many people are collaborating together, plus all that experience.

Donna saw how collaborating together added all the years of experience of the teachers involved

and could use that experience to benefit the students.

In conclusion, the literature of the field has described numerous benefits as a result of

teacher collaboration. The teachers in the present study also recalled similar benefits resulting

from their collaborative efforts. Their rich personal accounts of what they experienced and

learned through collaboration with colleagues and the conversations they shared with their

colleagues provides evidence that collaboration is worth the effort to learn how to accomplish it.

However, the literature of the field also describes the many challenges teachers may face as they

endeavor to work within their collaborative communities. In the field of education, teacher

collaboration is often considered to be one of the best practices teachers can do to improve

student learning, but there is "the idea that 'best practice' for some may not be best practice for

all" (Smylie & Eckert, 2018, p. 571). These challenges to collaboration will be discussed further

in the next section, Typology 5: Challenges of Collaboration.

Typology 5: Challenges of Collaboration

For some time now schools have sought to find "ways of working that break down the

traditional isolationist culture of classroom teaching" (Johnson, 2003, p. 342). The literature of

the field claims that teacher collaboration within schools can "facilitate collegial learning and

continuous improvement of professional practice of all teachers" (Kilpatrick & Fraser, 2019, p.

614). Teachers have "reported considerable benefits from working collaboratively in terms of

their learning about the 'crafts' of teaching and their abilities to reflect on teaching and learning"

(Johnson, 2003, p. 346). However, "when teachers collaborate, they [can] run headlong into enormous conflicts over professional beliefs and practices" (Achinstein, 2002, p. 421). They may experience a variety of conflicts and problems that interfere with unity and progress within their schools.

The teachers who participated in the present study had much to say about what benefited them in their practice of collaboration, as was discussed in Typology Four about the benefits of collaboration. However, they also had much to say about the challenges they faced in their efforts to work within their collaborative communities. The discussion of these challenges in this section of data analysis uses four categories: the challenges arising from personalities; the challenges of communication; the challenges involving workloads; and, the challenge of change faced by members of collaborative communities.

Challenges arising from personalities

Attempts to foster a collaborative community may spark conflict. However, other than avoiding conflict, "Understanding conflict is essential to building a fuller conception of teacher professional communities" (Achinstein, 2002, p. 425). Achinstein even argued for "embracing conflict" (p. 449), describing it as an opportunity for creativity and change. However, teachers often consider conflict to be unappealing, frustrating, and even painful.

Frances noted that dominant, negative, overbearing personalities were her biggest challenge in working within collaborative communities.

> Well, personalities. If you've got somebody that's more overbearing, or they feel like
> they are the only [one], this is the only way, the best way. There are some that I know in
> the past, they are always doing all the talking, and they don't want anybody else to share,

like their way or the highway. That's the biggest thing. You can't be dominant. . . . Or a

person that is just negative. There's the ones that just do not want to collaborate, because

there have been times when everybody was an individual. [However] it doesn't do

anything good. It doesn't help [when] everybody is their own island.

Frances also believed that it would be better not to collaborate at all, that it would do more

damage to try to collaborate with such teachers in that kind of situation. Her avoidance of

collaboration reflected what Hargreaves' study (2003) of the emotional components of teachers'

relationships with their colleagues revealed: "what teachers disliked most was conflict with their

colleagues" (p. 28) and they learned to avoid such situations. Nevertheless, addressing "the

complexity of the collaborative process and the time needed to navigate differences"

(Achinstein, 2002, p. 450), should be an essential part of professional growth to foster

collaboration among teachers.

Kelly also noted that difficult personalities were especially challenging for her to work

with. However, Kelly did not allow teachers with difficult personalities to stop the collaborative

process within her grade level. She had a practical approach to coping with such teachers.

So you have to deal with people that you may not particularly like. That's a challenge of

separating the personal part of it from the professional part of it, and respecting people

for who they are in the professional role that they have. But in any job, that's what you

have to do; be able to work with anybody and accept who they are. We all bring different

[ideas]. We all think we have the best [ideas].

The strong collaborative culture of Kelly's school helped to support the teachers and enable them

to avoid most of the pitfalls of stress, division, and strife, and to come back together to move

forward. Kelly described how frequent special events to celebrate as a school-wide faculty, not just as a grade level, helped to overcome such communication challenges.

> Even when you're not particularly happy with some of your colleagues, you're still able to collaborate and move forward. Really, sometimes relationships do get strained because there's stress, but having the connectedness of different events along the way kind of brings people back together.

Kelly's approach to accepting other colleagues, even though some were difficult to work with, exemplified a form of leadership. Cramer and Stivers (2007) addressed challenges similar to those Kelly experienced and how she handled them. "There are no quick fixes; addressing challenges in collaborative relationships takes reflection, energy, and persistence" (p.10). Even in the most difficult circumstances with very challenging people and their personalities, Kelly was willing to reach out to them.

> Amy, with many years of experience teaching in both regular classrooms and in co-teach classrooms, shared how she believed that personalities made a difference in whether or not a coaching cycle could benefit participating teachers.

> I think it could become very negative if you are with somebody whose intentions are not good, or who is just mean-spirited. I think if there's just one person in there who has an edge to them, those people who were nervous wouldn't have felt as open. . . .I've always been on a grade level that's had one person that's kind of difficult.

For Amy, working with difficult personalities presented challenges because others would not be comfortable sharing their views.

Another challenge Amy described was the role of experience in a particular collaborative relationship. At the time of her interview, Amy was co-teaching with a new teacher. In her previous years of co-teaching, she always worked with a colleague who had the same level of experience as she did.

> It's been hard because [the new teacher] is not coming with experience, but it's inspiring because she has all these ideas. She says, "We're going to make these folders," and I'm thinking, "Yeah, the folders will be trash by the end of the month, it will never work.". . . There are times when my co-teacher doesn't come with anything. She's just eager. She thinks, "Okay, I have no idea what I'm going to write for this or do for that." Oh gosh, that was horrible!

Amy felt pressured by too many demands because she had to carry most of the responsibility for teaching in her classroom and provide guidance for the new co-teacher. Amy perceived this co-teaching relationship to be more like that of a teacher working with a preservice intern. Amy, in this case, was not experiencing what Friend and Cook (2013) recommend for collaboration to take place, that is, equally valued and shared contributions for the work to reach a common goal.

On the other hand, Amy described another scenario in which she had a colleague on her grade level who possessed a wealth of knowledge. Amy made the mistake of asking her for help.

> It turned into, "Well, why wouldn't you do it that way?" She will make you feel stupid, it's just her air. "You've been here, don't you know?!" Well, obviously I didn't! I think if I was somebody who is just starting out like my co-teacher, she'd probably be crying in the bathroom if the person said that to her.

Although her colleague had extensive knowledge, her communication approach was not supportive of Amy' needs.

Amy had a few other colleagues on her grade level whom she characterized as not having welcoming personalities. However, she added:

> I will go to them every time because they understand how to interact with somebody. . . . If you go to [this colleague], she will do anything. She just knows how to be approachable, she knows how to control herself and not make you feel like your ideas are not valid. . . . She never made me feel bad.

Amy concluded that this colleague was "crusty on the outside but had a soft inside" and was worth taking the chance to ask for help or advice.

Terry had participated in collaboration with her grade level colleagues where she encountered teachers openly disrespecting those with whom they did not have a good relationship.

> I think there can be some disrespect in how some people respond [to each other], because if you're with a group of people, and we've had this with our grade level, where not everybody gets along. So when somebody makes a suggestion, you can get an eye roll or, "Well, I don't like that idea." And, even though I may not like you, we may not get along, there's no reason in that [collaborative] process for there to be disrespect. It needs to be kept to yourself, and, if you don't want to use their ideas, that's fine. It's your right because it's your classroom, you're a teacher, you're an adult, you can do with that whatever you want. But to blatantly show that, I think that can definitely hinder the process, and can be a big problem.

Terry concluded with the thought that, "Sometimes [collaboration] works, and sometimes it doesn't. . . .It really depends on the people that are sitting in there with you. Are you biding your time, or are you really there to learn something?"

Michelle's biggest challenge was trying to work with teachers who were unwilling to share with each other.

> [Teachers] must be willing to share their knowledge because not everybody is willing to
> do that. They think that the other person is going to become more successful than them,
> or because then they're going to know more than them. They keep too much to
> themselves, and they don't share. They don't want to learn anymore, or try anything
> new.

Michelle recommended that teachers who don't get along should "put certain things aside and just focus on helping the kids to be successful. They need to remember that they are there for the kids."

Jackie described a challenge for her and her co-teacher that involved having different tolerances of what was acceptable behavior in their classroom and what was not. Her co-teacher was a mother of five boys, and Jackie had one girl.

> She was good at rolling with the punches and fabulous at laughing with the kids. She
> would say, "Oh my, I can't believe they just did that, that's hysterical!" And I'm
> mortified and saying, "Are you kidding me? That's not funny! Stop laughing!" So we
> are talking about it, and we are evolving. She finally said, "I guess we have different
> ideas of what we can tolerate."

Jackie believed that, once she and her co-teacher could agree on what was acceptable behavior, their classroom would be more manageable. They were still working on this agreement at the time of the interview.

Donna was emphatic about her greatest challenge, that of dealing with conflict. Unfortunately, one of her grade level colleagues was the source of a lot of conflict, in which Donna frequently had to intervene and try to manage.

> I avoid conflict at all costs. I *hate it!* [emphasis added] My colleague gets into a lot of
> conflicts, and I'm the grade level chair, so it's hard for me to calm her down. . . . I think
> [her problem is] being strict and inflexible. . . . I'm very good at talking parents down,
> but not very good at talking my colleague down. When she is typing out an email
> [response], she'll come, show it to me, and I'll tell her, "I'm not sure you should say that.
> Maybe you could say this instead."

Fortunately, Donna and her colleague had a very close relationship and could communicate very openly and honestly with each other. They found ways to work out any conflicts that arose, such as asking Donna to check her emails to make sure they were not offensive. Not every group of collaborating teachers had this same ability to communicate so openly, to come to agreement on issues, and to solve problems. The next category describes some challenges of communication faced by the participants in this study.

Challenges of communication

A challenge faced by administrators and teachers in large schools is the difficulty of maintaining high quality, equal communication among grade level teachers and the principal. Barbara described how, in a large school with more than five or six teachers on each grade level,

collaboration and communication became very difficult. She stated, "Common planning time during the school day for large grade levels is scarce and sometimes stops altogether." Similarly, Deborah stated that, if a principal has to split the grade level for common planning time, both groups may not have an equal voice. Deborah described the following scenario:

> We have so many teachers on our team that we can't all meet in the same day. So if six teachers meet on one day, then the following day three teachers meet. So it really doesn't make any sense, and I've talked to our principal about this because I am in that second day group. . . .So any decisions that need to be made have already been made by the six, and we might get some of that information, but we don't get the same information. In fact, our principal and the reading coach meet with the first group of people, they've never met with our group, the second group. It makes us feel completely unimportant because we have no input. The decisions have already been made. Our principal doesn't even come to ours.

The principal tried to have one of the teachers in the first group share notes with the second group, but the notes were either insufficient, or incorrect, and the attempt soon failed.

Another challenge with communication occurs when one person dominates a conversation during collaboration. Terry explained how important it was to her and her colleagues that whoever was leading the collaboration for her grade level should manage those people who try to dominate the conversation.

> What frustrates me if I'm not leading the collaborative process is the person who is leading when they allow those people to dominate. I really think it's effective in that situation if the leader says, "Okay, that's a great idea, what do you [a different teacher]

think?" Because I'm not going to overpower you, I'm not going to struggle to be heard. .

. . I'll just shut down and I'll let you do it, but then you're going to miss out on the ideas

of all these other people. . . . You need to be more assertive, or be willing to stand up and

say, "Hey, we haven't heard from this person. Would you like to share? Do you have

anything to add?"

Terry added that such domineering colleagues were being disrespectful to everyone in the

meeting when they ramble on.

Although coping with domineering colleagues is unpleasant to many teachers, Kelly

described how teachers who were excessively quiet and unwilling to share ideas were very

challenging for her when she attempted to collaborate with them.

It's tougher to know what their thinking is without pushing them over the edge. In the

right way, asking them what they think about things, and making sure that we value what

they say makes it easier for them to then become more open to expressing their ideas.

Colleagues who are at opposite ends of the spectrum of communication, both too dominating and

controlling, or too withdrawn and unwilling to share ideas, create challenges for the collaborative

process.

Deborah shared a troublesome experience about when she became the target of her grade

level colleagues' animosity. Communication from her co-teacher and grade level became very

negative against her, and she was falsely accused of doing things she did not do. She continually

ran into increased opposition from her colleagues which led to her being considered as "an

outsider" (Ceglie & Settlage, 2019, p. 5). She did everything she could to distance herself from

her grade level because the stress became intolerable. She realized that, in cases like this, not everyone can collaborate.

> I stopped going to the teachers' lounge that year because I learned that was just a bed of negativity, and I would come out of there stressed out. So I felt better when I just stayed in my room and didn't have that. . . . I just think there's some personal challenges for me because of my past. Being burnt, it makes [collaboration] a little harder. But I think when you're with a team that's supportive, it makes it all a little easier. I think it all depends on the people that you work with.

Deborah's story eventually had a positive ending. All of the teachers who were previously negative against her retired, and she moved to a different grade level with colleagues who knew her and appreciated how much she shared with them in their grade level collaboration. At the conclusion of our interview, Deborah shared a favorite saying of hers. "Don't expect people to treat you the same way you treat them. Not everybody has the same heart."

Challenges of workloads

Another challenge faced in the collaborative process is the challenge of teacher workloads. Johnson (2003) stated the following:

> One of the arguments advanced in favor of collaborative teaming is that it leads to work sharing, and a reduction in the amount of duplication of work undertaken by teachers. . . . However, in many cases, the need to meet more frequently with colleagues to discuss and plan collaboratively placed an added work burden on teachers. (p. 346)

Most of the participants in the present study described the shortage of time available to collaborate and the unequal distribution of workloads among their colleagues. This increased

workload has also been reported by preservice teachers who complained about "having to do extra work if their teaching partner did not follow through with a task" (Ricci et al., 2017, p. 697).

Some of the participants commented that the newer teachers liked to leave school right after the bell rang, and they took very little work home with them. Teachers who had been teaching longer often stayed after school later to finish what needed to be done and to prepare for the next day or week of classes. Several teachers expressed their irritation when new teachers would come up to them and say things like, "Do you have that spelling list done?" Or, "Did you finish the list of homework assignments for the week yet?" This kind of treatment of colleagues was very unfair.

Amy liked having a co-teacher to work with in her classroom because, in her opinion, having two adults in the room was better than just one. However, she and her partner had 38 students in their co-teach class. In addition, it was an inclusion class, meaning that students with special needs were also in the class who needed extra help and attention. Amy said, "It's kind of crazy sometimes. With 38 kids, we have to move on. You can't keep waiting for the low group. You had to do that in small groups. It's different when you put that many in one class." She explained how difficult it was to continually push their students to keep up with the district's expected rate of student progress in achieving required progress.

Jackie had similar concerns about the added responsibility of a larger class size when she was asked by her new principal to co-teach again. The principal had heard how successful Jackie and her former partner were when they co-taught in previous years. Jackie asked her

partner, who had become her closest friend, if she wanted to co-teach again. Her former partner's answer was:

> "Absolutely not! I do not!" And this is the reason why, because it's double the number of students, and that's not right. And because of my ESE [background] she knew that we would have students with disabilities, which she does not have an issue with. . . . But to move to 3rd grade in a co-teach with double the amount of kids, this is not reflective of best practice and even federal law for ratio of inclusionary students. So my colleague said, "We're going to get screwed because we're so great!"

Jackie said that she and her partner ended up co-teaching again anyway, and because they knew how to make it work, they felt fortunate to have a few more successful years as co-teach partners.

Barbara talked about what she considered to be her biggest challenge of the co-teaching class; different styles of classroom management of student behavior.

> I felt like I always had to be the one to take control. [My co-teacher] could sit back and be the nice teacher, where I had to do the discipline. We had 31 children, and we had some real behavioral problems. When you have that many kids in one room and a lot of behaviors, you have to be a little stricter than you would normally.

Barbara added that she and her co-teacher had a huge difference in their teaching styles. She said that if she had to do it over, she would select a teacher she had known a lot longer who shared similar approaches to teaching as she did. In previous years, Barbara had had very positive experiences with co-teaching and grade level collaboration, but this year was the last

time she would ever co-teach with anyone. To make the situation worse, her grade level hardly ever collaborated due to time constraints and a lack of willingness to work together.

Deborah had a problem similar to Barbara's. She and her grade level colleagues did not share the work load equally.

> I just feel like with most collaborations it ends up being two or three people doing the bulk of the work, and everyone else benefits, and it gets old. . . . . I had a person this morning say, "Well, I got your vocabulary words, but you didn't send me the homework." And this person hasn't created a single thing that would benefit our grade level this year. . . . A few people take on the brunt of the work, but that's how it gets done.

Johnson (2003) addressed the problem of teachers' work load not being shared equally. Unequal distribution of teachers' workloads caused some teachers to be reluctant to collaborate with colleagues not willing to do their part. Deborah was hopeful that the next school year would be easier because she and a few other teachers had created everything they needed "from scratch," and it could all be used again in the years to come.

Linda considered her biggest challenges in her workload to be time, stress level, and fatigue.

> I find all of those collaborative [meetings] or trainings beneficial. Even data chats can be beneficial when it's specific to your grade level. . . . But time is a big one. Even our common planning gets cancelled all the time. . . . I think it just comes down to stress level. Sometimes you are just tired, and you don't want to put your all into it, so just do whatever.

Like Linda, teachers often want to collaborate to learn new ideas and methods to improve their teaching, but the constraints of time interfere with opportunities to collaborate with colleagues. As a result, their "learning opportunities are fragmented and inconsistent rather than sustained and coherent" (Gamoran, 2003, p. 60).

Teachers who try to collaborate with colleagues who are unwilling to do their fair share of the work have to struggle harder to accomplish their goals (Johnson, 2003). Sometimes teachers' unwillingness to work collaboratively can divide teachers and cause the loss of "common goals" (p. 348). Add to that the difficulties of not having enough time, and too much stress and fatigue, teachers may have to reevaluate what they're trying to do.

Challenges of change

"The only thing that is constant in life is change." This quotation, attributed to Heraclitus, the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher (SocraticLife.com.au/Heraclitus), is as applicable today as it was when he first asserted it. Teachers face constant, continuous change throughout their careers. Following a two-year study of several teachers in different public schools, Hansen (2017b) stated, "The feeling seems widespread that we humans are standing on an unsteady platform with a great many uncertainties and confusions surrounding us" (p. 207). Participants in the present study shared their experiences with changes in their careers as teachers, in their teaching practices, or even in themselves personally. Some teachers described how their growing families caused their teaching practices to change.

When Amy used to work in an urban school, she was very reflective about how each day went and how her students were doing both in school and at home. She even kept a notepad on her night stand so she could write notes to herself or her colleague about her students or special

ideas she thought of in case she woke up during the night. But now that she had children of her own, she stopped doing that. She described how she has changed her work life.

> Sometimes I'm so exhausted I just fall asleep, so I'm feeling like I'm not as reflective as I used to be. I'm just not, but I think that's just where I am in life right now. I feel like I used to think so much about things.

In spite of the challenges she faced working in an urban school, Amy expressed how much she valued everything she learned from her colleagues and the specialists who worked with her. "It's just people talking that has been what's really shaped me and my former co-teacher for so long." When she decided to start a family, she transferred to another school which was closer to her home.

> Terry described a personal change that she experienced one day when a close colleague confronted her with direct honesty about her being selfish and inconsiderate when she was participating in meetings with her coworkers.

> I used to be that person that would sit there and just ramble on and not think about the other person, until a friend of mine said something to me about it. [It was] the greatest thing she ever told me, and I knew she was doing it completely out of love for me. She said, "People like you, but they don't like your personality when you do this stuff." The instant she said it I thought, "You are right!"

Terry said that she changed that part of herself immediately because she, herself, disliked being around other teachers who behaved in that same self-centered way.

> Donna perceived a lack of change within other teachers' practice at a lower grade level in her school. The problem involved a lack of teacher "buy-in" of district and grade level

expectations. At least one of the teachers did not want to give up her practice of teaching "cute" lessons she found on the internet instead of what the district curriculum guidelines mandated for her grade. The worst part of this teacher's unwillingness to change her practice was how negatively it impacted her students' learning. Donna explained, "I think the hardest part about collaborating is agreeing on what you're teaching, and what that standard means." During our interview, Donna became noticeably upset as she described what she saw in her students when they were promoted to her grade.

> Seeing it from a grade level where we're doing everything the same, and how well it works, and seeing other grade levels where everybody is doing something different, you know whose class your kids came from. . . . It has nothing to do with the kids' abilities. One teacher will do a lot of science and group projects, and those kids already have the ability to talk in groups and work in groups. These others know how to color pictures. So how can these teachers not see the benefits of [collaboration]? It's not about you, it's about the kids and making sure all of these kids get the same [learning].

Teacher "buy-in" affects teacher practice and expectations at subsequent grade levels, and, most importantly, student learning.

In addition, Donna described how challenging it was for the faculty at her school to cope with so many changes in principals.

> I think it's done a job on our collaboration as far as grade levels go and the expectations. Not every grade level collaborates even now, even though they're supposed to. Everybody brings their [materials], and you look at it, and then you take it back and you do what you want to do.

Donna was saddened by the increasing amount of superficial collaboration she saw taking place in her school, and how individual teachers refused to give up or change what they wanted to do. Herr (1999) referred to this kind of collaboration as a "bogus participatory structure" (p. 235) or a "routinized form of non-involvement" (p. 235) that never really gets to the real work of school improvement.

The challenges described by the participants in the present study could have blocked or interfered with the collaborative process in their classrooms, grade levels, or schools. In spite of many negative effects the challenges had on the participants, they all believed in the many positive effects and benefits the collaborative process could offer to teachers and ultimately to their students. One of the most valuable results of successful collaboration was the influence it had on the development of teachers' personal and professional identities. Teacher identity is discussed in further detail in Typology Six: The Role of Collaboration in the Development of Teachers' Personal and Professional Identities.

Typology 6: The Role of Collaboration in the Development of Teachers' Personal and Professional Identities

Throughout the interviews conducted in the present study, participants responded to open-ended questions in great detail as they described their experiences with collaboration. As the teachers shared their memories of past collaboration and thoughts about their ongoing collaboration, most of them described how these experiences positively influenced the way they felt about themselves personally and professionally. The literature of the field corroborates the effects that successful collaboration can have on teachers' lives. "Collaborative relationships can be a rich source of professional and personal growth, well worth the investment of time and

effort that may be needed to nurture them" (Cramer & Stivers, 2007, p. 10). The collaborative relationships of most of the teachers in the present study were very important to them, in such a way that none of the teachers wanted to be isolated from their colleagues.

Further, in an ethnographic study of 25 teacher leaders in five schools by Beachum and Dentith (2004), teachers who worked in collaborative communities revealed strong, positive perceptions of how their work shaped their identities.

> [Teachers] described their work as intense with a strong sense of their own capabilities as leaders and teachers. All teachers articulated a love for teaching and a clear sense of their own personal and professional purposes. They regarded their work as teachers as valuable and central to their life purpose. Many viewed themselves as good learners as well as good leaders. (p. 281)

The perceptions of the participants in the present study echoed the perceptions stated above. I organized the participants' responses addressing the development of their professional identities into three categories: attainment of professional knowledge and skills, the development of personal confidence, and the influence of the school's collaborative culture on the participants.

Professional knowledge and skills

All the participants in the present study described their experiences in learning about teaching from collaborating with their colleagues. Johnson's (2003) study provided similar outcomes: "Overall, teachers reported considerable benefits from working collaboratively in terms of their learning about the 'crafts' of teaching and their abilities to reflect on teaching and learning" (p. 346). The teachers in the present study described how they expanded their professional knowledge and skills in collaborating their colleagues.

Terry began co-teaching as a new teacher working with an experienced veteran teacher. She remembered that, at first, she felt intimidated by how little she thought she knew about teaching compared to how much her partner knew after having so many years of teaching experience. Terry quickly learned that her intimidation was unfounded.

> I could have gone into that collaboration process really as a rookie, learning everything
>
> from her, but what I found out was that there were a lot of things she could have taken
>
> away from me, especially being so fresh out of college, and we worked really nicely in
>
> that. So we learned how to really grab each other's strengths and put those into practice,
>
> and to be willing and open to tweak what we felt worked for us.

As Terry and her co-teacher progressed through the school year, Terry frequently participated in collaboration with other teachers on their grade level. Terry described herself as usually being talkative and quick to respond in most meetings, but that changed when she realized that she could learn in a different way.

> I'm usually the one that's very quick with a response, and I've learned that the best way
>
> to glean from other people is to just sit back and reflect on your own teaching as you
>
> listen to other people, and listening as to how you can incorporate their ideas into what
>
> you're doing. . . . Honestly, I'm confident in who I am as a teacher, so I think, you know
>
> sometimes it's better to just be quiet and listen. I think you learn a lot more.

Terry expressed her appreciation for everything she had learned from her colleagues thus far in her teaching career, but, more so, she appreciated what she had learned from her former co-teacher who was retiring.

Those 2 years that we co-taught, what did I really see and learn that I implemented once

we stopped co-teaching? I've kind of drifted from them, and now I want to come back to

them, and, especially with her retiring. She's saying, "What do you want from my

classroom? What can I do for you before I go?" So it's a great opportunity for me to

reflect on all that [experience] and take from her before she goes, not just tangible items,

but advice and strategies and tips.

Terry was sad to see her former co-teacher retire, but she expressed how much she appreciated

all the professional knowledge and skills and, especially, friendship that she gained from her

association with this veteran teacher.

As stated earlier by Beachum and Dentith (2004) regarding their participants, "many

[teachers] viewed themselves as good learners as well as good leaders" (p. 281). This

description was also applicable to Kelly's experience. She expressed a love of learning from her

colleagues, especially from the new teachers.

The young and new teachers, it's great. I love working with them because they have this

whole, you know, like the new doctor in the field, they have all of the new research in the

area, and, "Oh yeah, tell me about that!" I love learning from them, and it's good to have

their fresh perspective.

Although Kelly had been teaching in the same school and classroom for years, she reflected that

she always wanted to expand her professional knowledge and skills. In fact, she had just

accepted a new job as a reading interventionist the day before we had our interview.

I just love reading and love the reading part of my job. I have always really spent a lot of

time doing the research and thinking about reading being such an important part of a

child's life. . . . So that [reading interventionist position] is going to open new doors for me, and, in fact, a whole new professional development community is going to open up for me. . . . I will be collaborating with [a cohort of reading interventionists] every month on our reading strategies and reading interventions and the reading research. So I am very excited about that!

Kelly was anticipating learning more about new reading research and the improvement of teaching practices, not only from her colleagues and her personal studies, but also from new cohorts of reading interventionists from various locations around the county.

Jackie described learning from her colleagues at the local level. She recalled a time when she had lost some of her enjoyment of teaching because she had become so regimented by the pressures from her school district. Her future co-teacher had worked in close proximity to her as a substitute teacher before becoming a certified teacher. Jackie described how they both influenced each other personally and professionally. One day Jackie told the substitute,

"You know, I have been listening to you sub for [the other teacher's] maternity leave, and you're really good at it. You should do more than sub." Several months later, [the substitute] gave me a book, because she said, "You need to start reading novels again because you read way too many professional texts." So she gave me a book and the inscription inside of it said, "I took your advice and did what you said, and I passed the test!"

Jackie and her friend learned from each other by taking each other's advice. Jackie began to enjoy reading novels, relaxing in her job, and listening to what she called her "favorite sound, children laughing." Her friend became a certified teacher making a better income for herself and

her family, and eventually became Jackie's co-teacher. They successfully co-taught together for over seven years.

Linda began her teaching career by earning alternative certification through the state rather than an education degree. Her first educational experience was co-teaching for three years with an experienced teacher. Linda described how much she enjoyed learning new ideas and creating and sharing new materials for student learning centers. Her co-teacher even taught her different alternatives to using her "abrasive, loud mom voice" to manage classroom behavior.

Linda talked at length about how much she and her co-teacher learned from the action research they experienced from the Co-Teach Project sponsored by the University of North Florida.

> That is actually one of the coolest things we did. We learned all the different ways that co-teachers can teach, all the different co-teaching methods. [At first] we were just kind of thrown together. No one really taught us how to co-teach. . . . We planned together. I'd call her about centers to make. . . .This [Co-Teach Project] was a lovely thing.

Linda shared how one of the co-teach methods was their favorite. She described examples of lessons they taught together with both of them in front of the class. One would teach, and the other would pretend to be a student misunderstanding the lesson. The students would laugh and learn at the same time. At the end of three years, the principal split them up. Linda recalled that they called it a "forced divorce." For the next five years, she and her former co-teacher were departmentalized and shared an office between their two classrooms. They devised ways to do a modified form of co-teaching by frequently teaching and sharing lessons together, then organizing all of their students into various groups for small-group instruction.

Eventually Linda moved to another school. She soon became the grade-level chairperson and quietly demonstrated her knowledge of how to collaborate with her colleagues. She continually shared her teaching methods and materials with them and helped them in any way they asked. Linda recalled,

> I think you just learn. You're like little kids. Every year you just soak it up, and every year you feel like you're getting better and better. Eventually you have eight shelves full of centers, and you ended up finding that you're the person they come to, to ask, "Hey, what are you doing?" Or, "What center can I make?" And it surprises you. You think, what? Me? It's a good feeling.

Teachers would come into Linda's room, see an idea they liked, and adapt it for their classrooms. Collaboration seemed to be a very relaxed, natural part of their daily teaching routines.

Linda also described how she and her colleagues would have impromptu discussions in the hallway. Linda remarked, "We'll walk around and say, 'Hey, what are you doing? Oh that's a great idea! That's mine today.'" According to Linda, sharing knowledge, skills, ideas, lessons, and teaching materials with each other was vitally important. Openness, honesty, and unselfishness with each other were necessary qualities which these teachers needed to have to be able to collaborate successfully.

> There's not one thing in [my classroom] that I didn't get from somebody else. So if someone else borrowed it from me, it wouldn't be like borrowing it from me. You borrowed it from whoever I got it from, and from whoever they got it from. It's like a pool of knowledge.

Linda understood the importance of collaborating with colleagues to share knowledge, skills, ideas, lessons, and materials with each other in order to build a knowledge base for teaching.

Linda also possessed an historical view regarding the role of collaboration among teachers. Her grandmother and mother had been teachers many years ago before collaboration had become an important focus in some educational settings. She recalled experiences with her grandmother as a teacher, and she described those memories. "You never saw teachers collaborate. I never saw my grandmother talk to any other teachers. You felt like it happened in a vacuum. You were in this little room, and there was some good and bad to it."

When she began teaching, Linda recalled that, "I didn't know how to teach. I needed help, I needed ideas. I was crappy my first year of teaching. I feel sorry for those poor kids who had me. I cry sometimes [thinking], "Oh, I'm so sorry. I hope someone else taught you better the next year." Although Linda felt terrible about the quality of her first year in teaching, she knew that education had changed significantly since her grandmother's era. As her career progressed, Linda's level of personal and professional confidence in her identity and ability as a teacher had become strong. She described creative and highly imaginative activities she was then offering to her students. She enjoyed sharing advice, ideas, materials and planning with her colleagues as much as she enjoyed teaching her students. Linda was even laughing and dramatizing how she taught her students about life in other countries. She was an excellent example of a teacher who was confident in her abilities and talents as a professional educator and was fulfilled in her life as a teacher. Such personal and professional confidence in teacher identity will be discussed further in the next section.

Personal and professional confidence

The second category for describing and interpreting how collaboration helped participants to develop their professional identity was their level of personal and professional confidence in themselves as teachers. Such confidence does not come easily to most teachers without sufficient support from colleagues and professional development that can help improve teaching practices.

> Although researchers have extensive and growing knowledge about how people learn and how to teach them effectively, such knowledge is useless for improving practice unless it gets into the hands and minds of teachers and administrators who need to use it. (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 195)

One of the best ways teachers can develop effective teaching practice is through sharing with expert teachers and other educational professionals and through their modeling of effective practices with each other (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The participants in the present study shared how their confidence in themselves as teachers was strengthened by collaboration with others, whether they were knowledgeable teachers or educational specialists in certain areas, made a difference in how they identified themselves as confident professional educators.

Amy described the first years of her teaching career working in an urban school. She expressed how worried she was in the beginning because she knew she was "there for a purpose," but she was not able to reach so many of her students whom she portrayed as "kids in crisis." She said that the students' life circumstances were so serious that "teachers were going home crying daily." Her feelings of inadequacy changed when two reading interventionists came to her classroom and demonstrated more effective teaching methods to help such a

challenged population of students. Amy said that she learned so much from working with colleagues and specialists in that urban school, so that she could assert, "I really know how to teach. I would teach reading to no matter who, what, where you are, you were dealing with this population that really needed you." Amy's confidence in her effectiveness as a teacher carried over into her sense of her own professionalism. She knew her strengths, and she felt comfortable sharing helpful teaching practices with her colleagues.

Amy concluded with some final comments about how collaboration had affected her identity as a teacher.

> Over the years, it's just people talking that has been what's really shaped me and my former co-teacher for so long. . . . I think I just learned a lot. I know my confidence has been much higher, and I know other people's confidence has been higher. . . .
>
> Collaborating with other people has made me the teacher I am today.

Amy's level of self-confidence as a professional teacher was also evident in her personal self-confidence as she shared her perspectives throughout the interview. She wanted other educators to understand how important the process of collaboration can be for them to experience success and satisfaction in their teaching careers.

Terry did not have as much teaching experience as the other participants, so she focused on how she felt when she was not able to cope with her frustration when her students did not understand the content she was teaching and so they would misbehave. She described how collaborating with other teachers helped her to regain her composure and to remember why she had become a teacher.

Sometimes we get so frustrated in our own classrooms with the kids and behavior. "My

gosh, they're not getting this. I don't know what else to do." So when you go into

collaboration with other teachers and you can just share, . . . I think it motivates,

encourages, and refreshes us. Okay, I can stick with this, I can go back to the classroom.

Terry shared earlier memories of how well co-teaching with a veteran teacher had prepared her

for assuming sole responsibility in her own classroom in her fourth year of teaching.

When my principal said, "I think it's time for you guys to separate," it gave me the

confidence to walk into my own classroom. . . .When I went into my fourth year of

teaching, I felt like I was light years ahead of everybody who was in my position.

Numerous times Terry credited her former co-teacher with the opportunity to learn from her

experience and knowledge. She concluded that she was a better teacher because she was willing

to sit with her co-teacher and be open to learn from her.

Jackie described how she felt about the collaborative process in her school and how it

affected her self-confidence in her ability to relate to her colleagues and to teach her students.

This is what I liked about this collaborative process in a larger group setting with your

grade level and team, because I felt like it gave me my intellect back. It validated that I

am an educated professional who has the ability to reason and think and work with other

people and articulate, and then transfer that to a group of children.

Jackie emphasized that she appreciated collaborating with her grade level colleagues because it

challenged her and stretched her. She added, "That's why I like co-teaching even more because

it makes me dig in to who I am and dig in to what I think [about] how it should be." Indeed, co-

teaching was clearly a positive experience for Jackie. However, a few participants in the present study had difficult challenges in their co-teaching experiences. Deborah was one of them.

Deborah was a talented and confident teacher, but she shared a poignant memory in which she had a very difficult co-teaching experience. When she began years ago as a new teacher, she wanted to share ideas with her grade level. However, her desire was misunderstood by her co-teacher and colleagues as an attempt to make them look bad. Deborah explained:

> I'm not even sure what exactly happened, but she started sullying my name. I guess she
>
> felt threatened. I don't know what the situation was, but she told people that I stole from
>
> her, that I didn't do any work in the classroom, it was horrible.

Her colleagues continued to falsely accuse her of offenses she did not commit.

The following year, Deborah requested her own self-contained classroom. She described how the experience affected her professionally.

> It made it very hard for me to trust people, because the people that were so mean were
>
> people that I thought were my friends, and I thought we had a really good working
>
> relationship. So, it did quite a lot of damage to me as a teacher. It took me a long time to
>
> feel like I deserved to be respected by other teachers.

A few years later, Deborah agreed to co-teach with a new teacher whom she had mentored. After a few months, Deborah's co-teacher told her something that was a turning point in Deborah's level of self-confidence. She continued her story:

> After we had worked together for several months, [my co-teacher] told me that she had
>
> been warned about me. That I would come in her room and nit-pick stuff and tattle on
>
> her basically. She said, "You've never done that to me, and I've never felt that way." So

I said, "Well, you know, at some point, I just had to decide that my reputation was strong enough that people wouldn't believe it."

Deborah's co-teacher really appreciated how Deborah treated her, and she, in turn, gave Deborah affirmation that Deborah was a good teacher, and that the judgmental people from the past were mistaken. Deborah concluded by saying:

I don't intend on doing anything else. I feel like [teaching] is what I am supposed to do for the rest of my life. . . .[Collaboration] is the right thing to do, and the world's not always going to be an even playing field, but you've got to do what your heart tells you is right, and what's right for the greater good.

Deborah was fortunate that she gave co-teaching with another teacher one more chance. The encouragement from her new co-teacher helped her overcome the discouragement she felt after experiencing unfair treatment from her former colleagues. Ultimately, Deborah's difficult experience with co-teaching ended on a positive note in a way that restored her professional identity as a teacher.

Johnson (2003) warned that, although the benefits of collaboration are many, the micro-politics of some teams can be complex and "damaging to the personal and professional lives of a minority of teachers" (p. 349). In Deborah's case with her first co-teacher, this was unfortunately true. However, co-teaching with a supportive new teacher helped to remove the damage done to Deborah's professional identity.

The third category for describing and interpreting participants' data regarding the development of their professional identities focused on discussion of their schools' collaborative cultures. In some schools, the collaborative culture was evident throughout the entire school. In

other cases, the collaborative culture was evident only in a few grade levels. Wherever this culture could be found, teachers and their students benefited and learning increased.

A school's collaborative culture

Teachers who work in a school with a supportive collaborative culture can experience what some in education would consider to be an ideal scenario in a high-performing school system.

It is possible to build a system in which students are routinely taught by well-prepared teachers who work together to create a thoughtful, high-quality curriculum, supported by appropriate materials and assessments that enable ongoing learning for students, teachers, and schools alike. (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 193)

Most of the teachers who participated in the present study fit the above description of well-prepared teachers and the kind of work that they do. The teachers appeared to have the kind of collaborative mindset that would promote a collaborative culture in their grade levels, if not their entire schools. They desired to share, encourage, and support practices that helped their colleagues and strengthened their students' learning. All participants shared in their own words how teaching in a collaborative setting helped shape the way they valued themselves as educators, professionals, and collaborators.

A collaborative mindset was evident in Terry's intent to learn from her colleagues the knowledge that she needed to perform her job as a teacher, and, in turn, help others in the same way.

I think it's that other person's willingness to sit down and talk with me, that I matter that much to that person, and that they want to help me succeed. Because it's usually me

going to them, and, occasionally, like with this new teacher, her needing my help and, did

I want to stay two or three hours after school? No, I didn't, but did I want to see her

succeed? Did I want to see that frustration go away? Yes! So when you're able to see

people's hearts for each other, I think that's when I walk away saying, "Okay, that was

great."

Terry clearly remembered what it was like for her years ago when she was a beginning teacher,

and how important it was to her that her co-teacher was so willing to share her knowledge and

expertise regarding how to effectively teach children. She, in turn, wanted to help other new

teachers in any way she could to give them the same benefits of teacher learning that she had

received.

Deborah had the same mindset as Terry when it involved sharing knowledge, lessons,

and teaching materials with her colleagues.

We are all here for the children. It should benefit the children. What we're doing is

making a difference for the children, and I do like to know that I've been able to make [a

teacher's] life a little bit easier sometimes. If we discuss a problem, and they come back

a week later and say that really works, that helps.

Deborah enjoyed the rewards of going the extra mile and doing what was right to help the

teachers who were her colleagues, and, in turn, to help all their students. She did special things

for her grade level teachers to show them how much she appreciated them.

As grade level chair, I want my team to know that they're valued, and I want them to feel

like they're important. . . . I want them to know that I value them because when they do

well, it makes our whole grade level look better. We are a team, and I want them to feel

that kinship.

Deborah worked hard to establish and maintain a collaborative culture in her school, even if it

was just within her grade level.

Kelly had a collaborative mindset on a larger scale. She demonstrated and modeled

effective teaching practices for her grade level, her school, and even conducted live-stream

professional development sessions district-wide.

We truly believe in opening our doors because if we think we're doing things right, we

should be sharing it. So, that has been part of our deal is to always be willing to have our

colleagues come in and take a look and get feedback from them. . . .We let people see

inside the walls of our school.

Kelly believed in sharing everything for the greater good. Kelly knew that she was a strong

teacher, but she also knew that a lot of her success and the maintaining of her sanity were

dependent on compassion and help from her colleagues.

We try to step back and respect our strengths, and work together and building those, and

also building up the areas that are not our strengths. I love that I have a group of teachers

that I work with in inclusion, that bring sanity to my world and ideas which I need as a

special educator, because there are frustrations at times. . . [when] I don't know what else

to do. They bring new and fresh ideas and are willing to say, "Why don't we try this."

Kelly summed up her beliefs about the important role a collaborative culture plays in her work as

a teacher.

Collaboration is the biggest part of this job. The best way to get better, the best way to

survive, the best way to do all the right things for kids is to have that collaboration with

others. And, I learned that it's a positive experience with others so that we can work in

one place and do things that are for the greater good and common good. That's

important.

Kelly's statements about the importance of collaboration in her work also represented how

important the collaborative process was in the work lives of the other teacher participants in this

study.

In the present study, data analysis indicated that, when teachers choose to collaborate

with each other to reach a common goal, the collaborative process can improve their teaching

practices, develop their personal and professional identities as teachers, and ultimately increase

student learning. As all the participants described their experiences with and perceptions of the

process of collaborating with colleagues, it became evident that this process had a strong

influence on their teaching practices and their students' learning. The following section will

discuss and apply Eisner's (1998) third and fourth dimensions of educational criticism;

evaluation and thematics. The evaluation dimension explains in greater depth what Eisner called

"educationally virtuous" (p. 100), or the "educational value" (p. 103) of the events described and

interpreted. The thematics dimension examines the "recurring messages" (p. 104) embedded

within what the teachers shared about their lived experiences within the collaborative process

and describes how understanding these experiences may help readers use what they may have

learned from the present study to guide their own practice in the future.

Evaluation

The previous section of data analysis described and interpreted the data using Hatch's (2002) typological analysis. The processes of description and interpretation also reflected the first and second dimensions of Eisner's (1998) approach to educational criticism. Beyond description and interpretation of data, Eisner emphasized that it is "vital" for educational critics to evaluate "what is seen" (Eisner, 1998, p. 99). In the present study, therefore, the goal of educational criticism was to also appraise the description and interpretation of the data that represented teachers' perceptions of the collaborative process in terms of their value and significance. This evaluative process is the third dimension of educational criticism.

Eisner explained the need for evaluation as part of educational criticism because the aim of education "is not merely to change students, but to enhance their lives" (Eisner, 1998, p. 98), and to assist individuals "to become what they have the potential to be" (p. 100). Thus, "understanding education requires appraisal of the kind of experience individuals have" (p. 99). Further, in education, an experience should be educational, the kind that "fosters the growth of human intelligence, nurtures curiosity, and yields satisfactions in the doing of those things worth doing" (p. 99). Therefore, data from the description and interpretation of teachers' experiences within their collaborative communities were evaluated in terms of whether the teachers' experiences were "educationally virtuous" (p. 100) with regard to improving their teaching practices, and thus increasing their students' learning.

The discussion of the evaluation dimension which follows focuses on three categories based on data from the present study: how teacher collaboration promoted teacher leadership; how teacher collaboration developed teacher identity, and how teacher collaboration influenced

student learning. Growth in teacher leadership, development of teacher identity, and student

learning are characteristics associated with a strong educational and collaborative environment.

The role of teacher collaboration promotes teacher leadership.

The literature of the field discussed how teacher leadership was an important aspect of

teacher collaboration. Smylie and Eckert (2018) focused on how teacher leadership development

may involve "collaborative work, initiation and implementation of improvement efforts,

development of professional community, and cultivation of teachers' individual and collective

capacity for serving students well" (p. 558). Teacher leaders can be placed in a position of

leadership by being empowered by their principals, or by being self-initiated, by "stepping

forward and assuming leadership" (p. 556). In the present study, most of the participants were

grade-level chairs, or leaders of their respective grade levels, so they were already in leadership

positions in their schools. The examples of their continuing efforts to collaborate with their

colleagues were evidence of how they stepped forward in positions of leadership to address

various teacher practices and to improve student learning. Whether the participants'

collaborative communities were their co-teachers, or grade levels, or subsets of their grade

levels, their collaborative efforts were ongoing.

The role of teacher collaboration develops teacher identity.

When teachers collaborate with each other to reach a common goal, the collaborative

process can have a positive effect on each teachers' self-esteem and self-confidence as being

effective teachers. When teachers' opinions and teaching experience are respected and valued by

their peers, teachers "feel more competent when provided with opportunities to exercise

professional judgement and share growing expertise with colleagues" (Bolin, 1989, p. 91). They

talked about their love for teaching and had a clear sense of their own personal and professional purposes (Beachum & Dentith, 2004). Such confidence, competence, and expertise lead to the development of strong teacher identities, ones that influence increased student learning.

The role of collaboration in influences student learning.

In the present study, teachers described how they collaborated to address the results of student assessments. Teachers would then demonstrate or discuss the mistakes to see if students recognized what they were doing wrong. Terry described an example of how this kind of teacher collaboration immediately improved her students' learning.

A lot of times it's a misunderstanding, which makes it funny, . . .[but] I wonder how many of my students are thinking that. Sometimes I'll share, "You know, one kid said this about that," and the kids will start laughing, and I'll say, "Well, how many of you think that too?"

Without the benefit of collaborating with her colleagues, Terry would not have known to check with her students for their mistakes. She appreciated being able to go back in and clear up the misunderstanding.

In her co-teach classroom, Jackie and her co-teacher role played questions and answers with each other during math lessons. She could see that some students were not understanding what they were supposed to be doing. "So I'll ask the questions that the kids are not. So that's how we keep the collaboration and the co-teach and the modeling [going]." In reading, Jackie would read aloud, and her partner would answer with a "think-aloud" to model better comprehension strategies.

Thus, co-teaching, a form of teacher collaboration, enabled teachers to work together with students in the process of learning. These above examples demonstrate how teacher collaboration can directly have an impact on improving student learning.

The next section discusses thematics, the fourth dimension of educational criticism.

Thematics

The fourth dimension of Eisner's process of educational criticism is thematics (1998). Themes can be "integrating" concepts (Hatch, 2002, p. 156) or meaningful statements reflecting the data as a whole. Themes can then lead to statements of general principles or generalizations based on interpretations of the data (Donmoyer, 1990; Patton, 2002). Distilled from patterns and "recurring messages" gleaned from the data (Eisner, 1998, p. 104), a theme has relevance that extends beyond a particular situation.

Analysis of the data in the present study led to the development of five themes: (a) Teacher collaboration is a complicated process that must be learned; (b) Teacher buy-in leads to successful collaboration with colleagues; (c) Teacher collaboration thrives in a collaborative culture and contributes to the development of such a culture; (d) Teachers need to have certain characteristics to collaborate successfully; and, (e) Collaboration can develop and strengthen teacher identity, improve teaching practices, and increase student learning. The following sections describe and explain each of the above themes.

Theme 1: Teacher collaboration is a complicated process that must be learned.

Teacher collaboration is a process that, when practiced in a knowledgeable manner, can be instrumental in the "development of teacher leadership, . . . professional community, and cultivation of teacher's individual and collective capacity for serving students well" (Smylie &

Eckert, 2018, p. 558). For years "the principle of collaboration has repeatedly emerged as a

productive response to a world in which problems are unpredictable, solutions ae unclear, and

demands and expectations are intensifying" (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 245). The benefits of teacher

collaboration are many, including moral support, improved effectiveness, opportunities to learn,

and continuous improvement, to name a few (Hargreaves, 1994). However, there are challenges

to collaboration, such as work intensification and interpersonal conflict (Johnson, 2003). When

teachers find themselves in a collaborative community, they do not automatically know how to

collaborate effectively with each other. "Many teachers do not know that they need

[professional development] in group membership and process skills" (Bolin, 1989, p. 90). The

process is complicated and requires teacher learning in order to navigate through the benefits and

challenges of teacher collaboration.

The participants in the present study were aware of the complicated work involved in the

collaboration with colleagues. They had been part of a special group of teachers who had

participated in a two-year Co-Teach Project and had learned what is involved in collaboration.

They understood the complexity of the collaborative process. Jackie described the situation

between herself and her co-teacher at the beginning of the project. "It brought my co-teacher

and I closer together. I mean at that point we were collaborating, but it wasn't fabulous. We

received a lot of tools to help support other teachers." Jackie described in more detail how the

Co-teach Project tools had helped the teachers to understand their partners better by learning

about different personality types, and how to determine each other's strengths and areas of

content knowledge. She and her co-teacher experimented with different models of co-teaching

to see which model would work best for them. Because of what Jackie learned, from that point

on, she felt more qualified to help other people who were entering into a co-teaching arrangement, or were encountering challenges in their collaborative efforts.

Donna explained what co-teaching was like in the beginning for her as a new teacher, and how the Co-teach Project helped her and other teachers who attended the project better understand how co-teaching worked.

> It first started off with [my co-teacher] saying, "This is what we're going to do." I'd watch her a lot and then try to do it on my own. There wasn't a district curriculum guide back then. There wasn't anybody that told you what to do when.

Donna and her co-teacher started out planning together every weekend so they would both know what they were going to teach in every subject every day of the following week. This type of collaborative planning eventually became too labor-intensive, and, after a year, Donna wanted a change in the way they were co-teaching. She and her partner agreed to departmentalize the teaching responsibilities. She would teach math and science, her partner would teach reading, writing, and social studies. She explained: "The professional development [taught in the Co-Teach Project] helped us see other ways that you could co-teach." In the following years, Donna no longer co-taught, but continued to collaborate with her grade level using collaborative skills she had learned from co-teaching and the Co-teach Project.

Theme 2: Teacher buy-in leads to successful collaboration with colleagues.

Teacher collaboration is a complicated process when first initiated. Johnson (2003) explained, "The reality seems to be that many teachers find that changing their work practices leads, at least initially, to an intensification of their workloads" (p. 347). Teacher buy-in is essential for truly achieving change (Horn, 2010). For collaboration to work the way it is

intended, the teachers who collaborate with each other should be participating in this process by choice rather than it being required by their principals.

Donna described what she saw other teachers facing when they were not given any choice by their principals and had to co-teach in collaboration with total strangers.

> Teachers were just told, "Here you are, here's another co-teach person." So that, to me, is a little rough, just to be thrown in. They were saying, "We were just thrown together," so I think that [Project] helped them to see, because we did a lot of talking about how you do things, and the different types of co-teach classrooms you can have. I think that [professional development] opened our eyes to the possibilities.

Donna and her co-teacher shared a co-teach classroom for seven successful years, and would have continued longer until their principal separated them and moved them to different grade levels. By this time, the principal considered Donna and her partner to be experts in co-teaching and would sometimes ask them to share their knowledge with teachers who were trying to set up co-teach classrooms. This task was made easier when the teachers were allowed to choose with whom they wanted to co-teach.

Theme 3: Teacher collaboration thrives in a collaborative culture and contributes to the development of such a culture.

Sergiovanni (2004) described collaborative cultures as "deliberate ones . . . creating a strong bond of people committed to working together toward goals and purposes that they share" (p. 51). He added that when a school achieves a balanced collaborative culture, "it can harness all of its intelligence, creativity, and leadership to solve problems and be successful" (p. 48). That is, within such a collaborative culture, teachers are able to work together to achieve goals

and to solve professional problems. Thus, teachers who successfully collaborate with each other in their professional communities contribute to the collaborative culture in their school, which in turn can perpetuate the success of continued teacher collaboration.

Terry expressed how much she enjoyed the collaborative culture in her school that made her want to collaborate even more with colleagues.

It's so nice when [teachers] come to me and they say, 'Hey, I've been trying your idea and it worked.' And that motivates me to want to collaborate more with people, because you feel appreciated, you feel accepted, and then you're willing to accept other people's ideas.

Amy described how much she enjoyed the collaborative culture of her school. "I think the more you're collaborating, the more you feel comfortable and valued. . . . I know my confidence has been much higher, and I know other people's confidence has been higher." In fact, colleagues' "confidence in each other's abilities and their belief in the impact of the team's work are key elements that set successful school teams apart" (Donohoo, Hattie, & Eells, 2018, p. 43). A collaborative culture is evident in a school where collaboration is "an informal as well as formal phenomenon" (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2017, p. 77), and where staff relationships are "characterized by trust, mutual support, openness about problems, celebration of successes" (p. 77) and other qualities that contribute to a school's ongoing, thriving collaborative culture.

Principal support is an important element in a school's collaborative culture, but within certain limits. Principals should support teacher collaboration by providing time and space to collaborate during the school day, along with other resources teachers may need. Indeed, time and space for teachers to do their necessary work are critical for effective for teaching and

learning (Posner, 2004). "Time is the most precious resource of the teacher" (p. 194). In addition, principals should facilitate teachers' access to professional development resources. However, once the support and facilitation have been provided, it is best for principals to step back and allow the teachers freedom to work together in their collaborative communities.

Theme 4: Teachers need to possess certain characteristics to collaborate successfully.

Amy had personal qualities that enabled her to learn from her more experienced colleagues and to improve her teaching practices, especially when she was a beginning teacher. She recognized the level of expertise in these teachers and, being teachable, she was willing to learn from them. Amy recalled, "I just had people out of the kindness of their hearts help me." Amy described the first time she watched her co-teacher teach writing. She remembered thinking, "She was so much better than me. Oh my gosh! I would have never said it like that. I would never have introduced it like that, and I learned from her." Amy demonstrated a growth mindset in that she wanted to learn how to become a better teacher from her colleagues and other experts who provided professional development and support at her school.

Amy also had the ability to collaborate with colleagues and stay focused on a goal to get the job done. She believed it was important for everyone who participated in collaborative meetings not to feel like they wasted time, but that they knew they accomplished something constructive.

Additional personal characteristics that Amy believed teachers should have to collaborate with each other were friendliness and being approachable. Amy knew why beginning teachers who came to her school always selected her to be their mentor. "I think my personality made

them pick me because I know that I'm an easy going person that can talk to people easily. I was always very willing to have people come in and look at my room." Amy exemplified a teacher who was always ready to mentor, teach, support, and share with anyone who asked her for help.

Additional personal characteristics that other participants in the study considered to be important for successful collaboration included showing respect for each other, regardless of differences, a willingness to listen to each other, and to share or contribute something for the benefit of everyone participating in the collaborative process.

On the other hand, if teachers were lacking these qualities mentioned by the participants in the study, collaboration could become an unpleasant challenge filled with conflict that would rarely be successful or beneficial to the teachers involved and their students.

Theme 5: Collaboration contributes to the development of teacher identity, improves teaching practices, and increases student learning.

This theme emphasizes what the literature has described as the benefits resulting from teacher collaboration. As teachers share and learn more about sound, effective teaching practices that help increase their students' learning, the teachers in the present study have become more aware of who they are as professional educators and their identity as teachers. The sharing and learning of good teaching practices can come through professional development from sources inside or outside the schools, or from each other. Teachers' colleagues are people who care enough to say, "This worked for me, here, I'll share this with you." "Have you tried this other strategy? Here, I'll show you how." "How can I help you?" "Send the kid to my room, you need a break!" These, and other benefits of the collaborative process can positively affect

teachers' lives and students' educational experiences. The confident statements of the teachers

in the present study showed a firm belief in their identities as teachers who know how to educate.

Amy described herself: "I really know how to teach. I would teach reading, no matter

who, what, where you are, you were dealing with this population that really needed you." She

added, "Me collaborating with other people has made me the teacher I am today." She expressed

how strongly she identified herself as a teacher, and that she attributed her confidence in herself

to the collaborative process.

At the time of her interview, Barbara was about to retire in less than a week. However,

she described how much she loved teaching reading to her students and watching them learn how

to read well.

> I guess I should be a reading teacher because I love reading and I love all the ideas for
>
> reading. There's so many things to do. I just want to be a reading teacher. . . . You're
>
> individualizing those children, and if they learn to read, they'll never have a problem for
>
> the rest of their lives.

Not only was Barbara confident in herself as a teacher, but she was confident in her ability to

teach all her students to become good readers. Even though Barbara was about to retire from the

public school system, she was already making future plans to continue teaching children to read.

These teachers reflected what it means to be a teacher. In a field based inquiry by

Hansen, (2017a), one question he asked was, "What does it mean to be a person in the role of

teacher" (p. 7)? In consideration of the concept of teacher identity, Hansen stated the fact "that

there are human beings who render themselves into what we call 'teachers', and who have a

genuinely positive influence on other human beings" (p. 8). He added that, "it is persons, rather

than roles as such, who educate" (p. 7). Indeed, the teachers in the present study have regarded their work as teachers as valuable and central to their life purpose (Beachum & Dentith, 2004). Their work has developed and shaped their professional identities as they assumed the important role of teacher.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Four described the process of data analysis used in the present study to understand how a group of teachers perceived the collaborative process and what their experiences were like within their collaborative communities. Eisner's (1998) four dimensions of educational criticism provided the structure for data analysis by examining the data through the use of description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics. Typological analysis supported the process of educational criticism by organizing the data for description and interpretation (Hatch, 2002). Typological analysis led to the development of six typologies to present the data regarding teacher perceptions of the collaborative process: (a) multiple views of collaboration; (b) the roles of principals in teacher collaboration; (c) elements necessary for successful collaboration; (d) benefits of collaboration; (e) challenges of collaboration; and, (f) the role of collaboration in the development of teachers' professional identities.

Data analysis revealed how teachers perceived the collaborative process within their collaborative communities and how they and their students experienced the benefits from the collaborative process. Thematics, the fourth dimension of educational criticism, generated five themes developed from data analysis: (a) Teacher collaboration is a complicated process that must be learned; (b) Teacher buy-in leads to successful collaboration; (c) Teacher collaboration thrives in a collaborative culture and contributes to the development of such a culture; (d)

Teachers need to have certain characteristics to collaborate successfully; and, (e) Collaboration can develop and strengthen teacher identity, improve teaching practices, and increase student learning. These themes facilitated the process of naturalistic generalization derived from data interpretation (Donmoyer, 1990; Patton, 2002) to be discussed in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five contains a summary of the present study, the generalizability of the present study, credibility with regard to the present study, recommendations for the practice of teacher collaboration, recommendations for leadership, limitations of the present study, recommendations for future research, and conclusions regarding teachers' perceptions of collaborative communities, the collaborative process, and the effects such communities can have on teacher practice and student learning in schools.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Chapter Five provides a summary of the present study, a discussion of its limitations, an examination of the generalizability of the present study, a discussion of how the study addressed credibility, implications for the practice of teacher collaboration, and recommendations for further research. The chapter then offers conclusions regarding teachers' perceptions of collaborative communities, the collaborative process, and the effects such communities can have on teacher practice and student learning.

Summary of the Present Study

Chapter One presented an introduction to this study and a brief overview of teacher collaboration and the need for it in the field of education. It also addressed the purpose of this study, the research question and the research design, and the potential participants. Chapter One also included a discussion of the significance of this research and its possible benefits to those in the field of education.

Chapter Two provided a review of the literature related to teacher collaboration, beginning with examples of collaboration and its power in human history. The chapter described what is known about the models, levels, and current practices of collaboration in school settings. The chapter also described how teachers' collaboration related to the concepts of teacher leadership and educational leadership in general. The chapter described the many benefits for teachers, both personal and professional, of collaboration, including how the process helps develop teachers' professional identities. Chapter Two discussed the challenges and possible conflicts teachers may face when collaborating with colleagues, and necessary elements for

successful collaboration in educational settings. It also discussed future trends regarding the role

of collaboration in schools, and what appeared to be gaps in what is known and understood about

teacher collaboration. Chapter Two concluded with a description of the conceptual framework

for the present study built upon the literature of the field. This conceptual framework indicated

the need for the study and guided the research design for the study, data collection, and data

analysis.

Chapter Three described the research design for this qualitative study, in addition to the

processes used to identify and recruit participants. The data collection procedures were also

described in detail, along with a discussion of the use of educational criticism (Eisner, 1998),

supported by Hatch's (2002) typological analysis, to structure the process of data analysis.

Ethical considerations were also described, along with an explanation of the procedures taken to

ensure the security of data. The final portion of Chapter Three, "Researcher as Tool," described

my professional and personal experiences as a teacher learning to collaborate with colleagues,

how these experiences led to the development of my connoisseurship regarding teacher

collaboration, and how they likely influenced the research process.

Chapter Four presented the analysis of the data gathered from semi-structured, in-depth

interviewing during which the participants shared their perceptions of their professional

experiences involving collaboration. Their experiences involved collaboration in co-teach

settings and collaboration with grade-level colleagues. Eisner's (1998) concepts of educational

connoisseurship and educational criticism provided the overall framework for data analysis, with

the literature of the field facilitating the interpretation of the data. Hatch's (2002) typological

analysis provided guidelines for developing the six typologies that initially organized the data for

further data analysis using educational criticism. Eisner's thematics then identified five recurring messages embedded in the analysis of the data.

Chapter Five includes a summary of the previous four chapters describing the present study, along with limitations of the study. The chapter then addresses how the results of data analysis can be appropriately generalized within the qualitative research paradigm. A discussion of how the study may be seen as credible ensues, followed by recommendations for collaborative practice in schools and recommendations for future research in education focusing on collaboration as a process.

Limitations of the Present Study

Because the teachers who participated in the present study were a specific group of teachers who participated in the University of North Florida's Co-Teach Project, the results of the study reflected the perspectives of these 10 teachers. These teachers had received extensive professional development regarding methods and models for co-teaching and for collaborating in co-teaching settings. They were one small group out of an original group of over 50 teachers in one district who agreed to being interviewed regarding their perceptions of and experiences within collaborative communities and the collaborative process. Thus, generalizing from the results of this one study to other situations where teacher collaboration may occur must recognize that this study used one group or case (Merriam, 1998) to explore the complexities of teacher collaboration from the perspectives of the teachers themselves.

Generalizability of the Present Study

As discussed in Chapter One, generalization in qualitative research proceeds in ways different from the process typically encountered in quantitative research. Given its focus on the particular (Eisner, 1998) as evident in complex, natural settings (Hatch, 2002), the process of generalization must proceed inductively. Further, the responsibility for generalizing rests with the reader (Donmoyer, 1990). Thus, in the context of the present study, readers need to engage with the data shared by the participants and the detailed data analysis process offered by the researcher in order to understand how one group of experienced teachers perceived the complex process of collaboration in their professional lives and how the researcher interpreted their perceptions. Readers then need to consider how applicable features of the present study may be to other settings and to transfer insights (Eisner) to them if appropriate. Stake (1978) described this process as naturalistic generalization, that is, readers' recognition of "essential similarities [from the research case at hand] to cases of interest to them" (p. 7). In short, the qualitative research study at hand becomes an opportunity for the reader to learn and to determine the utility of that study in informing the practice of teachers in other settings.

In reference to the present study, readers need to understand how this particular group of elementary-school teachers with experience in collaboration within their school settings perceived the process of collaboration. Those perceptions provide knowledge about the complexity of the collaboration process and can therefore inform others about what may be occurring in other collaborative settings and what teachers may be experiencing in those settings. As a result, readers may be better able to improve on-going collaborative processes or initiate

new opportunities for collaboration with deeper knowledge of how collaboration can best proceed to support teachers' work toward the goal of increasing student learning.

Credibility of the Present Study

Concern for the credibility of a given research study may involve the use of standards for judging the merit of its research design and its procedures for data collection and data analysis. Howe and Eisenhart (1990) offered five standards useful in the process of assessing credibility. Because "studies must be judged against a background of existent knowledge" (p. 7), credibility depends on the adequacy of the review of related literature. Chapter Two of the present study attempted to provide substantial support for focusing on teachers' perceptions of collaboration, both because of the literature's recognition that school improvement efforts necessitate the inclusion of teachers' knowledge to inform such efforts, and because of the effective role collaboration can play in developing programs and carrying out initiatives for improving teaching practice. The present study focused on the perceptions of teachers with extensive experience in collaboration and thus knowledge about collaborative processes. Indeed, the research question—What are the perceptions held by experienced public elementary-school teachers in a large urban school district in the southeastern United States regarding the collaborative process in their school settings?—arises from the review of related literature.

Two other standards offered by Howe and Eisenhart (1990) emphasized the need for "fit" (p. 6) between the research question and the procedures for data collection and data analysis and the need for rigor in the use of those procedures. Chapter One connected the research question to the need for qualitative research using semi-structured, in-depth interviewing, and Chapter Three provided detail about the nature of the research design and the specific data-gathering techniques

followed. The beginning of Chapter Four explained in detail the data analysis approaches used and the rationale for selecting them. Thus, the present study provided transparency about the research procedures used and the rationale for using them in order to support a claim that the research was carried out rigorously.

Howe and Eisenhart (1990) also stressed the importance of "value constraints" (p. 7) based on the "worth of research for informing and improving educational practice" (p, 7). The third dimension of Eisner's (1998) process of educational criticism used in the process of data analysis in the present study, evaluation, focused directly on whether the research process revealed something of value about the enterprise of schooling. Data analysis from the present study indicated that the teachers perceived the high value of collaboration for their own growth in teaching practice which, in turn, supported increased student learning. Further, the previous discussion of generalizability referred to the effort to help readers determine how they might learn from the results of the present study in order to transfer insights to other educational environments. In this case, the value of the present study is determined by the reader. Transparency regarding the research process evident in Chapters Three and Four were designed to enhance the value of the study for others.

A final standard for assessing the credibility of a qualitative research study focuses on ethics in research. Approval by the Institutional Review Board at the University of North Florida supports the present study's efforts to protect participants and to honor their rights throughout the research process.

Eisner (1998) also provided a standard useful in judging the credibility of a qualitative research study—referential adequacy. Indeed, throughout the data analysis discussion in Chapter

Four repeated references to participant data were cited in order to connect data interpretation to what was actually shared by the participants and thus to provide evidence of credibility. If credibility in the research process can be supported, then the results of a given study may be warranted. When both credibility and warrant are substantiated, the study has instrumental utility (Eisner, p. 39). Coupled with the identification of themes in Chapter Four, the present study offers readers insight into experienced elementary-school teachers' perceptions of the process of collaboration that can be useful in promoting teacher collaboration elsewhere in order to support increased student learning.

Implications for Collaborative Practice

Teachers and administrators need to appreciate that the process of collaboration is a complex and challenging endeavor, even as it is well worth the time and effort to establish ongoing collaborative practices in schools. When teachers come together to share their unique perspectives with each other and to develp more effective teaching practices, "the extraordinary synergy of collaboration can be realized" (Friend, 2000, p. 160).

Teachers usually do not automatically know how to collaborate effectively with each other. The process is complex and requires teacher learning through professional development. Collaboration does not occur through good intentions, but it requires learning the skills of how to manage the complexities of working with other adults to make it a reality (Friend, 2008). A study of special-education preservice teachers indicated that they recognized the importance of developing such skills for collaboration with teachers in general education to effectively meet the needs of students in inclusion classrooms (Ricci et al., 2017). The teachers acknowledged the value of the professional development they had received to facilitate collaboration with their

colleagues. Therefore, these preservice teachers provided an example of systematic professional development for collaboration that would also be beneficial for both regular elementary and secondary teachers—within teacher-preparation programs and through inservice professional development—in order to enable teachers school-wide to work together collaboratively to facilitate student learning. The perceptions provided by the participants in the present study affirmed the need for such comprehensive professional development to support teacher collaboration.

Both the literature and the results of the present study underscore that, in the early stages of initiating collaborative practices, teachers who participate should be volunteers. Because teacher collaboration is a complicated and demanding process, the teachers who collaborate with each other should be participating in this process by choice rather being required to do so by their principals. Further, the present study involving participants who had experience in co-teaching reaffirmed that collaborative teaching works best when teachers choose their own partners. In fact, principals often rely on teachers to volunteer and agree to co-teach (Friend, 2007). Such teacher buy-in is important to the success of the collaborative process. Thus, when school improvement efforts intend to include teacher collaboration as part of the process, teacher buy-in should be developed.

Teachers who successfully collaborate with each other in their professional communities contribute to the collaborative cultures in their schools. Sergiovanni (2004) encouraged schools to establish collaborative cultures that combine their "collective intelligence" and "organizational competence that makes schools smarter" (p. 49). Within a collaborative culture, teachers are able to work together to achieve goals and to solve professional problems. Thus, teachers who

successfully collaborate with each other in their professional communities contribute to the collaborative culture in their school, which in turn can support the success of continued teacher collaboration.

The perceptions of the participants in the present study provided evidence that collaboration among particular teachers can indeed contribute to a school-wide collaborative culture focused on student learning. Their descriptions of their experiences can thereby inform those in other educational settings seeking to develop a school-wide collaborative culture.

Teachers also need to have certain personal qualities to collaborate successfully with each other. Having a growth mindset, which includes willingness to learn and willingness to share, are all important qualities teachers need to have when collaborating with colleagues. In addition, having respect for fellow educators and an acceptance of differences in teaching styles and expectations are necessary qualities to persevere and to grow in collaborative relationships. When these personal qualities exist in teachers and their colleagues, collaboration is more likely to be successful. Therefore, professional development for collaboration should focus not only on the development of skills, but also attend to those dispositions required for collaboration to be successful.

In an attempt to clear up misunderstandings about professional collaboration, Friend (2000) warned, "We must renew our commitment to being students of collaboration in order to prepare ourselves to face the complexities and uncertainties of the future of our field. No single one of us can do it alone" (p. 160). As teachers choose to collaborate with each other to reach common goals, the collaborative process can improve teachers' practices, strengthen teachers' identities as professional educators, and ultimately increase student learning. The sharing and

learning of good teaching practices can come from each other in addition to professional development from sources inside or outside the schools. The teachers in the present study became more aware of who they were as professional educators and their identities as teachers, and thus, grew in their self-confidence and satisfaction with being teachers.

Recommendations for Further Research

All of the teachers who participated in the present study had extensive professional development regarding how to collaborate with other teachers, specifically in co-teaching settings. At the time of the study, all of the participants were continuing the practice of collaboration, usually with their grade-level colleagues. A suggestion for future research would be to conduct another study, perhaps a case study, with several of these same teachers to describe their actual classroom teaching practices involving collaboration. Such a study could also document their practice over time as they might continue to develop their collaboration with colleagues.

Another recommendation for further research would be to develop and administer a district-wide survey of how teachers perceive collaboration. This survey could provide a broad picture of how a large group of elementary-school educators in a district that supports collaboration perceive the collaborative process. Such a survey could inform district educational leaders regarding the effectiveness of professional development programs focusing on collaboration, especially in contributing to professional learning and improved outcomes in teaching and student learning.

Yet another research focus could examine how a beginning or novice teacher within a school known for its collaborative culture develops her or his collaborative practice. Such a case

study could involve observations of the teacher's classroom practice, as well as semi-structured interviewing with the teacher and her or his colleagues.

Further research should be conducted in the field of education to look specifically at how those in teacher education are preparing candidates for their future roles as teachers in schools with strong collaborative cultures. Although teacher education in exceptional student education has indeed focused on preparing their teacher candidates to collaborate with regular classroom teachers, the preparation programs in regular elementary and secondary education typically have not always emphasized the powerful role collaboration can play in teacher development, student learning, and school improvement (Pugach, Blanton, Mickelson, & Boveda, 2019). Such expanded preparation would serve these candidates well as they assume their roles as teachers. Furthermore, as Pugach, Blanton, Mickelson, & Boveda, (2019) noted in their extensive analysis of the teacher-education curriculum in exceptional-student education, such teacher preparation curricula in both regular education and exceptional-student education should acknowledge collaboration as occurring with fellow teachers, families, and other constituencies and as involving a hidden curriculum of power relationships. Issues of power are only one example of the complicated "dynamics" (p. 95) of collaboration where much research needs to focus.

Conclusions Regarding Teachers' Perceptions of Collaboration

The most important conclusion regarding teachers' perceptions of collaborative communities and the collaborative process focuses on what is necessary for collaboration to work well. When teachers believe in the importance of collaboration with their colleagues within collaborative communities and when they choose to collaborate with each other to reach common goals, the collaborative process can inform and improve teacher knowledge and

teaching practices. The choice to collaborate suggests that relationships are important. Indeed, as Darling-Hammond (1997) acknowledged, "Successful 21st-century schools will be grounded on two presumptions: that teaching matters, and that relationships matter" (p. 4). Thus, efforts to facilitate teacher collaboration must also focus on developing strong, positive relationships. As teachers build their relationships with each other in collaborative communities, their practices improve, their personal and professional identities as educators strengthen, and, thus, student learning increases, resulting in school improvement.

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APPENDIX A

Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. What does collaboration mean to you?

2. What kinds of experiences with collaboration have you had in the past?

3. What experiences with collaboration are you having now?

4. What do you and your colleagues try to accomplish when you collaborate?

5. What do you talk about when you collaborate?

6. What are the benefits you have experienced as a result of collaborating with colleagues?

7. What do your fellow collaborators contribute to your efforts?

8. What do you think you and your colleagues will doing 6 months from now?

9. What would make your collaborative experiences more effective or rewarding?

10. What qualities are necessary if teachers want to collaborate with colleagues?

11. What are the challenges faced in collaborating with colleagues?

12. What have you learned about collaborating as a result of your experiences?

13. How have specific professional development projects, such as the mentoring grant, affected your experiences with collaboration?

14. If you were asked to give advice to teachers on how to collaborate successfully with each other, what would you tell them?

15. If there is anything you would like to add to our discussion, please share it.

APPENDIX B.

Letter of Invitation to Potential Participants

[Date]

Dear [   ]:

My name is Pamela Evors, and I am enrolled in the Educational Leadership doctoral program at the University of North Florida. I've been a classroom teacher for many years and am currently working on my dissertation doing qualitative research on teachers' perspectives of the collaborative process.

I am contacting you because your name was included on a list of teachers who participated in the Teacher Mentoring Project conducted by Dr. Donna Keenan and Dr. Paul Eggen through the University of North Florida during the 2007-2008 school year. Dr. Keenan and Dr. Eggen recommended you as a good potential participant due to the fact that your experience as a teacher in a co-teaching classroom setting has probably given you in-depth knowledge about teacher collaborations that could be a valuable source of information for my study.

If you are a regular classroom teacher in a co-teaching setting, or if you are no longer co-teaching but still collaborate frequently (at least once a week or more) with your colleagues, I hope you will consider participating in this study. Your input could add insight and deeper understanding of what happens inside teacher collaborations within professional learning communities. This would be a chance for you to share your story to benefit others as they undertake collaboration in their schools.

Your participation will include an interview that will last approximately an hour to an hour and a half, scheduled at a time and place convenient for you. The focus of our conversation will be your descriptions of your experiences collaborating with your colleague(s).

I want to assure you of several things up front:
- Your participation is voluntary, and, should you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time during the study.
- Your personal identity will be kept completely confidential. You, your colleagues, and your school will be referred to by pseudonyms.
- The interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed, but its contents will be kept strictly confidential and carefully protected.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have about this study. Please feel free to call me at Redacted   or email me at Redacted   You may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Elinor Scheirer, at (904)620-1803 or email her at escheire@unf.edu for additional information.

Please respond to this email by reply or telephone and let me know if you would be willing to participate in this study. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Pamela Evors

APPENDIX C

Human Research Consent Form

University of North Florida Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership

Title:　　　　　　　　　Inside Professional Learning Communities: Teachers'
　　　　　　　　　　　　　Perspectives of the Collaborative Process

Investigator:　　　　　　Pamela A. Evors

Contact Information:　　　Redacted

Approved by the Institutional Review Board:

Please read this information carefully. It contains information about this research and your participation in it. If you agree to take part in this study, you need to sign this form indicating your willingness to participate. Your signature means that you have been told about the study and what the risks are. Your signature on this form also means that you want to take part in this study.

This research will explore teachers' knowledge of the complex social phenomenon of what happens inside teacher collaborations. The literature of the field describes much about the advantages and disadvantages of collaboration, but little is known about how teachers perceive what happens.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may discontinue participation in this research study at any time without penalty. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you otherwise are entitled.

There are no foreseeable risks to either you or your colleagues or school in this study. Your personal identity will be carefully protected. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your personal identity and the identity of your colleagues and school. The interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed, and the contents will be protected. All identities and data will be kept strictly confidential, each being stored and locked in separate locations.

Once I have transcribed your interview, you will have an opportunity to review the transcripts and make any changes you wish to make before giving your final approval.

You may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Elinor Scheirer, at (904)620-1803 or email her at escheire@unf.edu if you have any questions regarding this research. You may also contact the chair of the University of North Florida's Institutional Review Board, Dr. Katherine Kasten, who is also a member of my dissertation committee, at (904)620-2498 or email her at kkasten@unf.edu if you have any further questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Please initial the following statements and sign below:

_____I have had an opportunity to have all of my questions concerning this
research answered.

_____I have been given a copy of the related information and this consent form.

_____I agree to take part in this study.

_____I am at least 18 years of age.

My signature indicates my willingness to participate in research concerning teachers' perspectives of the collaborative process conducted by Pamela Evors and the University of North Florida.

_____   _____
Printed Name of Participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____
Printed Name of Principal Investigator   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Principal Investigator   Date

APPENDIX D

Letter of Request for Principal Permission

[Date]
Dear [   ]:

My name is Pamela Evors, and I am enrolled in the Educational Leadership doctoral program at the University of North Florida. I have been a classroom teacher at Englewood Elementary School for 25 years and am currently working on my dissertation doing qualitative research on teachers' perspectives of the collaborative process.

I am contacting you to request your permission for me to invite several teachers in your school to be participants in my study because they participated in the Teacher Mentoring Project conducted by Dr. Donna Keenan and Dr. Paul Eggen through the University of North Florida during the 2007-2008 school year. Their experiences as teachers in co-teaching classroom settings have probably given them in-depth knowledge about teacher collaborations that could be a valuable source of information for my study.

My study has received the approval of both the University of North Florida's Institutional Review Board and the Duval County Public School's Institutional Review Board.

The teachers I would like to invite to participate are:
        [names to be added here]
Their participation would include an interview scheduled after school hours and located at a place convenient for them.

I would assure your teachers of the following:
- Their participation is voluntary, and, should they choose to participate, they may withdraw at any time during the study.
- Their personal identities, the identities of their colleagues and school will be kept completely confidential and be referred to by pseudonyms.
- The interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed, but its contents will be kept strictly confidential and carefully protected.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have about this study. Please feel free to call me at Redacted   or email me at Redacted   . You may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Elinor Scheirer, at (904)620-1803 or email her at escheire@unf.edu for additional information. Please respond to this email by reply or telephone if you are willing to give your permission for me to contact your teachers. Thank you for your consideration
Sincerely,
Pamela Evors

APPENDIX E

PAMELA ANN EVORS

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA
JACKSONVILLE, FL
Doctorate Degree Educational Leadership (Apr 2020)

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA
JACKSONVILLE, FL
Master of Education Degree Special Education (Jun 1975)

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA
JACKSONVILLE, FL
B.A. Education (Jun 1974)

FLORIDA JUNIOR COLLEGE
JACKSONVILLE, FL
A.A. Education (Jun 1973)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

DUVAL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, JACKSONVILLE, FL
Elementary School Teacher: Englewood Elementary School, Aug 1986 – Jun 2016
- Taught Varying Exceptionalities from 1986-1990; Taught General Education 1990-2016

Preschool Teacher: Total Learning Center, Aug 1983 – Aug 1986
- Taught 4 and 5 year-old Preschool Children

Special Education Teacher: Mt. Herman Exceptional Child Center, Aug 1977 – Dec 1980
- Job focus was on teaching life skills, and administering physical and occupational therapy

Special Education Teacher at Anita Yates Exceptional Child Center: St. Augustine, FL , Aug 1975 – Jun 1976

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Adjunct Instructor for EDE 3940: The Integrated Learning Environment, Aug 2001 – Aug 2002
- Taught coursework for preintern student teachers part-time