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# Instructional Coaching Relationships: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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**Instructional Coaching Relationships: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

By

**Deanna Marie Elizabeth Fougère**

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
through the Faculty of Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Education  
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2014

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by

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28 May 2014

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication.

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## ABSTRACT

With the recent adoption of the literacy/instructional coaching model in many Ontario school boards, there is a need to further examine the coaching relationship between the coach and coachee and how it creates a space conducive for professional learning to occur. This study adopted a qualitative approach using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to examine the lived experience of instructional coaching and the instructional coaching relationship in the secondary school setting from a strengths-based perspective. Three instructional coaches and three corresponding coachees in a southwestern Ontario school board participated in semi-structured interviews. The notions of trust, growth, and power and resistance were the super-ordinate themes that emerged and were deeply embedded in the sociocultural context of the school. Instructional coaching holds great potential as a professional development model if the relational dynamics are thoroughly understood, acknowledged and addressed and the socio-cultural environment provides the space for professional learning to occur.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate my thesis to my loving husband, Arthur, and my two boys, Victor Xavier and Alexander (Xander) Hugo who both entered this world during my Master of Education studies.

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I would also like to thank the instructional coaches and coachees who participated in this research. Thank you for telling me your story so I can share it with others who are interested in implementing and improving instructional coaching models in schools. I feel privileged to have met you and learn about your experiences with coaching.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/SYMBOLS

EQAO	Education Quality & Accountability Office
IC	Instructional Coach
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act
OSSLT	Ontario Secondary Schools Literacy Test
PD	Professional Development

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

High-quality, research-based literacy instruction is currently a driving force behind teacher professional development in Ontario (Hardy & Wagga, 2009). As the province looks to increase adolescent literacy skills and ensure that students meet the requirements of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), effective professional development models are desired to increase the likelihood of improved instructional practice. Much has been written on the nature of various professional development models over the years and current models have departed from the traditional in-service teacher training model in lieu of job-embedded professional learning that takes into account the complex process of teacher learning and development (Avalos, 2011). Many school boards across Ontario have answered the call to improve instructional practice through the adoption of literacy coaches (Lynch & Alsop, 2007). Coaches are frequently chosen from among staff members on the basis of their experience as a successful classroom teacher, their ability to work with adult learners, their strong interpersonal skills, and their expertise in literacy instruction (Marsh, J. A., Sloan McCombs, J., Lockwood, J. R., Martorell, F., Gershwin, D., Naftel, S., ... Crego, A, 2008). The coach's role is to help teachers develop instructional strategies to build students' literacy skills across the content areas (International Reading Association [IRA], 2006).

A coach at the middle and high school level is often called an instructional coach rather than a literacy coach, reading specialist, or reaching coach (I predominantly use the term instructional coach in this study as this is the terminology currently used by our

school board). An instructional coach is defined “as someone whose primary professional responsibility is to bring practices that have been studied using a variety of research methods into classrooms by working with adults rather than students” (Kowal, 2007, p. 2). Effective coaches are expected to lead teacher development so as to improve instruction, increase teacher efficacy and collaboration, and ultimately, increase student achievement. However, there is a lack of clear specifications/conditions under which coaches can be assured to be an effective lever for change.

While the literature surrounding coaching is growing (e.g. Gallucci, DeVoogt Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010; Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; Marsh, Sloan McCombs, & Martorell, 2010; Rainville & Jones, 2008), there remain significant gaps that need to be addressed. For example, there is a need for further research at the secondary level (Marsh et al., 2008), a need to understand the context-specific nature of coaching, and a need to understand how to support teachers and coaches as they co-construct knowledge (Rainville & Jones, 2008).

Much of the literature explains that the efficacy of the coach is contingent on the quality of the relationships built with teachers (Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010) and some studies attempt to breakdown what conditions need to be fostered and maintained to build positive coaching relationships such as clear communication of the role of the coach (Al Otaiba, Smartt, & Dole, 2008; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010), an understanding of power and positioning (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2013; Rainville & Jones, 2008), and an understanding of group dynamics (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007). Although expected, the development of positive, trusting relationships is not easy and requires a great deal of time and energy (Strahan, Geitner, & Lodico, 2010). To address

this issue, I conducted a qualitative study from a strengths-based perspective to explore the intricacies of coaching relationships through in-depth interviews with instructional coaches and coachees. Through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, I explore the lived experience of positive coaching relationships as a means to understand individual, contextualized experiences within coaching, determine what key factors are common across relationships and how these positive relationships develop over time.

My hope is that this study will shed further light on the intricacies of instructional coaching and how to foster positive coaching relationships to the scholarly community while providing insights for policymakers, superintendents, principals and consultants as they make decisions on how to fund, support, and successfully implement instructional coaching models at the secondary level. My intention is to also provide a context for instructional coaches as they attempt to navigate a complex and nuanced role.

### ***Statement of Purpose***

In 2007, a southwestern Ontario school board introduced a job-embedded coaching program, to 13 of its 15 secondary schools. The instructional coach's role is to collaborate with teachers, co-plan, co-teach, debrief, and model lessons while assisting teachers in implementing research-based strategies consistently across the curriculum. The purpose of the proposed study is to explore positive experiences of job-embedded instructional coaching, including the coaching relationship, from the perspective of both the coach and the coached in the secondary school setting.

### ***Research Question***

What is the lived positive experience of instructional coaching, including the coaching relationship, among secondary teachers (coachees) and the instructional coaches (IC) in a southwestern Ontario school board?

### ***Researcher Positionality***

Having been coached during the first year and a half of the coaching initiative at my school board and having worked in the capacity of instructional coach for approximately four years, I have a deep personal connection to instructional coaching.

Introduced in the spring of 2007, literacy coaching was a new professional development initiative at my board. The coaches were hand-selected by principals, as the coaching positions were not considered permanent. The coaches were part-time released from their secondary teaching posts to fulfill the role. Coaches were given the title, ‘Team Teacher,’ as administrators and coaches felt teachers might be intimidated by the term ‘coach.’ Many secondary school teachers had to be convinced that literacy was an important part of content-area instruction and that working with a coach was worthwhile. This meant that coaches had to work hard to gain entry with teachers, as all collaborations were voluntary.

Although I understood the importance of literacy in the classroom, I, like many of my colleagues, felt some trepidation about opening up my teaching practice to the eyes of a colleague, especially since it was only my second year as a teacher. Despite my fears, I agreed to work with a coach, as I was interested in collaborating and learning new instructional strategies. As coaching was a new form of professional development for the board at the time, there was not a clear sense of the role of the coach, although there was a push for the coach and teacher to work from the Ontario Ministry of Education’s Think

Literacy: Cross-Curricular Approaches, Grades 7-12 (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 2003). Overall, my first experiences with coaching were lukewarm. I enjoyed learning new instructional strategies but I felt that I was under a microscope as the coach watched me implement new strategies in the classroom. The coach did not make me feel at ease during the classroom observation and I found myself reflecting on these experiences as I entered the role of coach a year and a half later.

In September 2008, I was asked by my principal to take on the role of Team Teacher at the secondary school where I taught. Alongside teaching science, two-thirds of my timetable would be devoted to instructional coaching with a focus on literacy. My role was to collaborate with peers, co-plan, co-teach, debrief, and model lessons while assisting teachers in implementing research based literacy strategies consistently across the curriculum. I agreed to this new challenge as I felt it would improve my teaching practice and would be a great learning experience; however, I was uncertain if I would be capable of doing service to the role. Armed with an open mind, my personal experience with coaching, and a new bank of instructional strategies and coaching theory, I began to negotiate the role of instructional coach.

The name of the role changed to 'Instructional Coach' from 'Team Teacher' a few years later due to the influence of Jim Knight, a research associate in the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning and the director of the Kansas Coaching Project who provided training to coaches in our board. His book, *Instructional Coaching: A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction* (Knight, 2007) and his professional development sessions, helped us define our roles and provided a more structured approach to coaching at our board.

As a coach I was extremely cognizant of the power the position of coach afforded me and I worked diligently to assure teachers that the coaching process was neither evaluative nor judgmental. I remember Jim Knight explaining that a coach should possess a paradoxical mix of ambition and humility and I try to coach accordingly. I realized the importance of implementing a coaching cycle when working with a teacher. This scaffolded structured approach allowed for more in-depth reflection and time to develop trust and encourage risk-taking in a safe environment. I tried my best to be explicit about my role and attempted to make teachers feel at ease, as I understood from personal experience that the coaching relationship might take teachers out of their comfort zone.

In September 2010, I was asked to work on contract for the Ontario Ministry of Education as one of four Provincial Literacy Coaches. This position was part-time through the fall semester and turned into a full-time position during second semester (February to June 2011). As a Provincial Literacy Coach, I worked with coaches from a variety of school boards from across the province to help them build capacity. This opportunity allowed me to see a variety of models of coaching at work and to get a sense of what was working for coaches across the province. As Provincial Literacy Coaches, we also created a number of research-based resource documents to support coaching for Literacy GAINS. One such document is the Framework for Literacy Coaching (LiteracyGAINS, 2010) which highlights four cornerstones of literacy coaching: 1) Building and Developing Relationships 2) Supporting Adult Learning and Professional Growth 3) Connecting with Improvement Planning, and 4) Leading Instructional Practice.

Due to my positionality as instructional coach for my board and a Provincial Literacy Coach, I was extremely cognizant of the fact that I had to ensure the participants in this study would not fear judgment and would feel comfortable sharing their experiences with me. I assured all participants that all information would be kept confidential. This is particularly important in educational settings, as I did not want teachers to feel that they will be judged or evaluated on their teaching/coaching practice based on their responses. During the time of data collection, I was not in the position of instructional coach as I was on maternity leave from my school board.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### *History of Coaching*

The roots of coaching can be traced back to the 1970's and 1980's when educators began to realize that many well-funded programs intended to improve education did not provide the desired changes (Joyce & Showers, 1996). As a result, Joyce and Showers proposed a job-embedded peer-coaching model that promised to increase the transfer of skills into classroom practice from 5% to 90% (Showers, Joyce, & Bennett, 1987). As peer coaching garnered attention in the early 1980's and 1990's, several Ontario school boards adopted the model (Watson & Kilcher, 1990). However, the scale of these initiatives was limited both in Canada and the US. The tide began to change in 1998, when the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) introduced standardized testing and began to collect data related to literacy and numeracy skills of students across Ontario (Hardy & Wagga, 2009). Feeling the heat over test scores, the Ministry of Education actively funded professional development geared toward improving student's literacy and numeracy skills (Hardy & Wagga, 2009). In *Early Reading Strategy: The Report of the Expert Panel on Early Reading in Ontario*, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2003) recommended that every school with kindergarten to grade 3 have a lead literacy teacher to support reading instruction and staff development (p. 58). By 2006, the Secretariat published a research monograph entitled, *The Effectiveness of Literacy Coaches*, which documented that most Ontario school boards have school-based and/or board-based literacy specialists (Lynch & Alsop, 2007).

In 2011, the Ministry of Education introduced provincial literacy coaches that work with various school boards to support literacy coaching for grades 7-12. During that time, a coaching framework was released as a guide for all those involved in literacy coaching. The framework featured four cornerstones of literacy coaching: 1) Building & Developing Relationships, 2) Supporting Adult Learning & Professional Growth, 3) Connecting with Improvement Planning, and 4) Leading Instructional Practice and outlined the practices, skills, knowledge, and attitudes of coaches as they work through these growing competencies (Literacy GAINS, 2010).

In the United States, there has been a similar push towards coaching as a way to meet reform efforts and improve standardized test scores. The role of the reading specialist in the US, who traditionally worked with at-risk students in unsuccessful “pull-out” models, evolved into coaching when the International Reading Association in 2000 put out a position statement entitled, *Teaching All Children to Read: The Roles of the Reading Specialist* (Mraz, Algozzine & Watson, 2008). With a predominant focus on literacy, the *No Child Left Behind Act* [NCLB] (2003) further prompted national professional organizations to promote literacy coaching and standards related to the role. Gaining momentum through state mandates and pilot programs, literacy coaching is becoming a popular form of professional development (Gross, 2010) and the literature is now playing catch up with coaching practices.

### ***The Impact of Coaching on Teacher Practice and Learning***

Although studies may be limited and results mixed when it comes to the influence of coaching on instruction and student achievement, much of the literature highlights the positive influence of coaches on teacher practice. For example, many studies emphasize

that the coaching phase of professional development has a significant effect on teacher practice in terms of levels of implementation (Batt, 2009) whereas stand-alone professional development are found to have negligible effects (Showers et al., 1987). In addition, teachers and principals noted that middle school reading coaches have a positive influence on classroom instruction and teacher confidence and knowledge (Marsh et al., 2008). In terms of specific effects coaching has on teacher practice, Sturevant and Linek (2007) found that high school teachers became more metacognitive and reported using literacy strategies in the classroom on a regular basis, as a result of being involved in the coaching process.

The length of time a teacher works with a coach has also been observed to change the degree of influence on their teaching practice (Batt, 2009; Matsumura, Garnier, & Resnick, 2010; Shildler, 2009). For example, teachers who were coached for one year strongly believed that content-focused coaching (CFC) helped to improve their instructional practice (Matsumura et al., 2010). This emphasis on time is also evident in Neuman and Cunningham's (2008) research that found statistically significant improvements in the quality of language and literacy practices among teachers who were involved in a combination of coaching and course-based professional development. The intensive coaching model used in this study was designed to develop relationships with teachers over time (Neuman & Cunningham, 2008).

Although coaching models vary significantly, there are a number of common practices found among coaches that teachers believe help them improve their practice. In one account, teachers broke down the specific areas of coaching that they felt were especially useful in helping them integrate Content Literacy Project (CLP) strategies into

their practice: “coaching sessions, interventions, modeling, co-teaching, and follow up visits” (Cantrell, Burns, & Halloway, 2009, p. 89). All of these coaching practices were seen as important support mechanisms for teachers to develop confidence and experience using new teaching practices. Another coaching practice associated with changes in instruction is the frequency of data support provided by coaches. Some teachers reported that reviewing assessment data enhanced their teaching methods (Marsh et al., 2010).

### ***The Impact of Coaching on Teacher Collaboration and School Culture***

Although many coaches work one-on-one with teachers, coaches may also work with teams of teachers to improve instructional practice (Cantrell et al., 2009; Strahan, D., Geitner, M., & Lodico, M., 2010). In a case study set in an urban high school over a two-year period, the literacy coach helped foster a sense of community, encouraged collaboration and distributed leadership while promoting a shared language among teachers and students (Strahan et al., 2010). In the first year of the study, the coach worked with teachers on an individual basis; this naturally evolved towards collaborative group efforts during the second year of the study. It is important to note that the coach emphasized her role as “guide on the side” throughout her work with teachers. This enabled her to “serve as a catalyst for professional growth among groups and individuals” (2010, p. 530). Knight (2011) cautions coaches to neither be too passive nor aggressive in their approach. Essentially, coaches need to be strong leaders who “possess a paradoxical combination of humility and ambition” (Knight, 2011, p.126).

In a longitudinal study of a reform model where coaches predominantly work one-on-one with teachers, Biancarosa et al., (2010) noted that the significant gains in student literacy learning over the four-year period might be partly due to the fact that

informal professional networks of teachers working towards literacy instruction arose organically. Therefore, even if the coach does not formally collaborate with teachers in groups, the coach may inadvertently promote collaboration and social learning among colleagues. This descriptive evidence shares further insight into how coaching might encourage collaboration and improve school culture.

Although teacher collaboration is seen as a common goal of many reform efforts, an interesting finding by Matsumura et al. (2010) suggests that a school's pre-existing culture of teacher collaboration can actually pose problems to implementing a coaching model whereas a weak culture may in fact encourage teacher participation in coaching models.

### ***The Impact of Coaching on Teacher Efficacy***

Teacher efficacy “measures the extent to which teachers believe their efforts will have a positive effect on student achievement” (Ross, 1992, p. 51) and is considered an important construct in instructional effectiveness. Ross (1992) first proposed a link between coaching and teacher efficacy when he found that teachers who spent more time working with a coach saw improvements in both teacher efficacy and student achievement. Several later studies in this literature review have also associated coaching to higher levels of teaching efficacy (Cantrell et al., 2009; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Shidler, 2009) but there is still a need for a more complete picture of what determines teacher efficacy and how to build it (Shidler, 2009). It is also important to note that many teachers contribute their improved efficacy and their increased personal expectations of students (in regards to ability, behaviour and success) to be directly related to the work of the coach (Cantrell et al., 2009).

Ross (1992) suggested that teacher efficacy might be seen as a variable state that is subject to change. The suggestion of variability implies that coaches may be able to help improve teacher efficacy over time. In a study on teacher efficacy and literacy implementation, Cantrell and Hughes (2008) employed teacher efficacy surveys before and after participation in professional development with coaching. The results of these surveys denote significant improvements in teachers' personal and general efficacy for literacy implementation and in teachers' collective teaching efficacy.

### ***Challenges Related to Putting Coaching into Practice***

#### ***Specific Challenges at the Secondary Level***

Mangin (2009) makes it very clear that the challenges related to literacy coaching should not be underestimated. In fact, many of the writers in this literature review focus on the challenges involved in assuring that coaching is effective (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Mangin, 2009; Sturtevant & Linek, 2007). However, it is important to note that much of the available research is found at the elementary level and middle school levels (Batt, 2009; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Marsh et al., 2008; Matsumura et al., 2009; Mraz et al., 2008), with only a handful of studies to date at the secondary level (Blamey, Meyer, & Walpole, 2008; Strahan et al., 2010; Sturtevant & Linek, 2007).

Literacy instruction can be a difficult sell to content-area teachers in the secondary setting. Unlike their elementary counterparts, secondary teachers highlighted throughout the literature need to be convinced that literacy is an integral part of content-area instruction (Blamey et al., 2008; Sturtevant & Linek, 2007). Therefore, many coaches spend countless hours working to convince teachers that content area literacy is

of significant importance, dealing with the accompanying resistance while trying to create an identity for themselves as their roles are somewhat ambiguous (Blamey et al., 2008). Blamey et al. (2008) argues that more research is needed on the role and responsibilities of secondary literacy coaches as they may diverge from those of the elementary coach.

### ***Roles and Responsibilities***

One of the major challenges related to putting coaching into practice is that there is a lack of training and clearly defined roles and responsibilities for many coaches across North America (Denton & Hasbrouck 2009; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Mangin, 2009; Marsh et al., 2008; Mraz et al., 2008). However, Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) remark that it is sometimes the coaches who get the most training who are the most confused about their role. This may be due to the fact that training comes from multiple sources purporting different philosophies and practices. Matsumura et al. (2010) similarly contends that having multiple or conflicting instructional goals will undermine the work of the coach with the teacher.

### ***Time***

A challenge that permeates the literature is the issue of time (Al Otaiba et al., 2008; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Strahan et al., 2010, Sturtevant & Linek, 2007). Some coaches are spread too thin and have a difficult time juggling the myriad of responsibilities placed on them. This lack of time may be attributed to the lack of clearly defined roles, too many schools to service, as well as funding issues related to coaching initiatives (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010).

Logistics aside, the social work of coaches takes time and cannot be rushed. Al Otaiba et al. (2008) noted that it took the entire year for teachers to become “coachable” (p.149) and Strahan et al. (2010) explains that the social work is difficult, requires support from administration and can take several years to create truly collaborative learning communities. Schools have complex cultures. The change process does not happen overnight, in fact; many schools struggle to effectively implement change. Furthermore, educating teacher leaders to become agents of change can be a challenge in itself (Sturtevant & Linek, 2007).

### ***Lack of Trust and Power Inequality***

In any relationship, coaching included, trust building is of utmost importance (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007). Therefore, lack of trust can hinder any reform effort and negate all progress previously made. It may come as no surprise that the literature attributes lack of trust as a factor to coaching initiatives that are not successful. Mraz et al. (2008) notes that there may not be a lot of trust between coach and teacher. In fact, if coaches are not aware of the power dynamics in relationships and play the role of “expert,” the coach may inadvertently prevent trust and dialogue from occurring (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007). Rainville and Jones (2008) point out that there is a lack of empirical research surrounding the situational complexities that coaches must negotiate as they work with different teachers, students, and classrooms. Many coaches attribute their lack of success to stubborn, resistant teachers without questioning perceptions of power as it relates to the coaching role (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010).

The addition of literacy coaches into schools adds a new dimension to the hierarchical nature of a school’s structure. McLean, Mallozzi, Hu, and Bottoms-Dailey

(2010) describe literacy coaches as constituting another layer – they are “not quite administrators and not quite teachers” (p. 264). This means that coaches need to be cognizant of the fact that teachers may question the coach’s ties to administration and share a concern over the assumed evaluative capacity of the coaching role (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007; Mraz et al., 2008).

Coaching is a situated and nuanced role. The relational dynamics shift from context to context and the coach uses language (verbal and non-verbal) to shape conversations. Coaches must also be aware that power and positioning are operating at all times and understand how these factors directly shape conversations. Important to the work of a coach, Rainville and Jones (2008) explain, “the shaping of a conversation affects the kind of thinking and action that is possible in a particular context” (p.441). Seen as a multifaceted undertaking, the social practices of the coach require negotiation of competing discourses (McLean et al., 2010). Without an understanding of power, positioning, and context, misunderstandings may occur. Rainville and Jones (2008) explain that when a teacher and a coach have varying expectations surrounding the coach’s role, misunderstanding and miscommunication are likely to take place. This may lead to an unproductive relationship and a lack of trust.

### ***Coaching Skills, Conditions and Supports***

In order to promote professional growth and cultural change, it is necessary to mobilize the contextual conditions needed to be effective. Much of the literature addresses the skills of a coach as well as the structures and conditions needed to support coaching as the degree of implementation of an educational reform effort is viewed as the most salient variable in increasing student achievement (Reeves, 2010).

### ***Building Relationships***

Coaching is based on relationships of trust and respect. This idea is reiterated through much of the literature (Blamey et al., 2008; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Mraz et al., 2008; Strahan et al., 2010). The conditions needed to foster such relationships begin with clear communication of the role of the coach (Al Otaiba et al., 2008; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010); a deep understanding of how power and positioning affects relationships (Rainville & Jones, 2008); and a greater understanding of group dynamics and the dialogic nature of coaching (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007). Establishing informal relationships can promote trust and diminish power struggles in coaching relationships (Rainville & Jones, 2008). These informal relationships may explain why coaches who were former teachers within a particular school tend to have an easier time gaining acceptance among peers (Al Otaiba et al., 2008; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010).

The expertise and knowledge of teachers must also be respected if teachers are to feel they are equal partners in the coaching process (Strahan et al., 2010). The coach must be clear about the non-evaluative, non-judgmental nature of their role, and be conscious of how they present themselves to teachers (Blamey et al., 2008). Coaches should start their work with teachers who want to work with them (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010); relationships should not be forced or mandated. Coaches should be empathetic, flexible and optimistic in their approach and see their role as a ‘guide on the side.’ Ultimately, the efficacy of the coach is contingent on the quality of the relationships built with teachers (Biancarosa et al., 2010).

### ***Supporting the Teacher as Adult Learner***

Although many teachers enter into the role of the coach as an expert teacher with a significant amount of experience teaching children and strong interpersonal skills, most coaches are unfamiliar with how to support adult learning. The literature offers a variety of suggestions of how to support adult learners in professional growth.

First, for professional growth to occur, the literature suggests that the learning must be ongoing; embedded into daily practice; and, be experiential in nature. One-shot professional development sessions have been proven to be ineffective (Showers et al., 1987). Second, coaches should consider themselves co-learners or co-participants in the professional learning process (Blamey et al., 2008; Rainville & Jones, 2008) as they build collaborative cultures within schools. Third, teachers, like students, should be given differentiated support based on their individual learning needs (Blamey et al., 2008; Matsumura et al., 2010) and coaches should help teachers identify goals and determine a focus for learning (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010) while assessing their readiness for change (Matsumura et al., 2010). Finally, significant attention should also be paid to teacher's belief systems about student learning and their role as a teacher (Cantrell, 2009).

### ***Guiding Instructional and Assessment Practices***

Most literacy coaches enter into the role with strong background in literacy instruction and pedagogical knowledge as well as a reputation as an expert teacher (Marsh et al., 2008). Coaches are expected to have a vast repertoire of research-based literacy strategies at their fingertips and a sound knowledge of content area literacy instruction (Biancarosa et al., 2010; Blamey et al., 2008). However, infusing literacy across content areas is seen as a major and difficult area of the coach's work at the high school level (Blamey et al., 2008; Sturtevant & Linek, 2007).

To further support adolescent literacy, the coach must take on the role of data analyst (Blamey et al., 2008; Mangin, 2009; Marsh et al., 2010) to assess the needs of the school, the teachers, and the students. Coaches must know how to analyze assessment data (classroom and school level) and evidence of student learning to help teachers identify the strengths and weaknesses of students (Marsh et al., 2010). Marsh et al. (2010) explains that using assessment data to inform instruction requires creativity and is much more challenging process than data analysis itself. Coaches need to stay current with research affirmed instructional and assessment practices to guide adolescent literacy instruction.

### ***Principal's Supporting Role***

Principal leadership has been touted as a critical dimension to ensuring the participation of teachers in the coaching process (Mangin, 2009; Marsh et al., 2010; Matsumura et al., 2009; 2010). Publically identifying the coach as a valuable resource to staff, the principal enables the coach to build capacity in schools. In fact, Matsumura et al. (2009) found that principal leadership was significantly associated with the frequency with which teachers worked with their coach.

Along with public support, the principal should grant the coach professional autonomy and be an active participant in the coaching process (Matsumura et al., 2009). Marsh et al. (2010) contend that principals need to provide professional learning opportunities to coaches, provide coaches with mentors, ensure that the coach has time to work directly in classrooms, and recognize the important qualities of effective coaches so they can hire appropriately. Principals play a pivotal supporting role in the work of a coach.

### *Other Recommended Supports in the Literature*

Coaching is a multifaceted and situated professional role. It is not a quick-fix solution to ensure professional learning needs of teachers are met. In fact, many feel that the role may take several years to learn well (Al Otaiba et al., 2008; Biancarosa et al., 2010; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010). As previously mentioned, there is a distinct need for role clarification (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Mraz et al., 2008) and to embed this role within a structure that includes a strong district vision and a systematic, coordinated approach to ongoing professional learning (Gallucci et al., 2010). In a recent study that showed gains in student achievement, the researchers speculated that the significant difference in results might be due to the fact that the coaches had clearly defined roles and received a full year of professional development training before they began to work with teachers (Biancarosa et al., 2010).

In terms of specific professional development recommendations for coaches, the research points to the value of networking with other coaches and offers numerous examples of how this might occur (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Matsumura et al., 2010; Rainville & Jones, 2008). This collaborative approach might take the form of professional learning communities, provincial professional organizations, Additional Qualification (AQ) courses, role playing, analyzing audio and video of teachers and coaches at work, peer observation, a coach-to-coach cycle (where coaches coach each other), having a critical friend, and engaging in reflective dialogue with a colleague. Mangin (2009) recommends further research on determining the best types of professional learning opportunities and supports for coaches to ensure a good return on

investment. Whatever the method, one thing is clear – coaches need to learn from each other to foster a greater sense of efficacy in their role.

### ***Summary of the Literature Review***

This literature review provided a broad synopsis of the peer-reviewed literature on instructional/literacy coaching published over the last decade. The research is predominantly descriptive in nature and limited in its generalizability. However, recently, there has been an increase in empirical studies that have generated promising evidence to support the effectiveness of coaching as it relates to teacher practice and student achievement (Biancarosa et al., 2010; Lockwood et al., 2010; Marsh et al., 2010) as well as more subjective studies that look to the contextual factors and discourses surrounding identity and the role of the coach (McLean et al., 2010; Rainville & Jones, 2008).

While the literature surrounding coaching is growing, there remain significant gaps that need to be addressed. For example, there is a need for further research at the secondary level, especially in regards to how coaches address the issues surrounding content-area literacy, a need for studies with a Canadian context, and a need for further in-depth studies to analyze the situated nature of instructional coaching and instructional coaching relationships in particular.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore positive experiences of job-embedded instructional coaching, including the coaching relationship, from the perspective of both the coach and the coached in the secondary school setting. My research takes an experiential qualitative approach in order to explore the lived experiences of participants. Qualitative methodology is appropriate as it is better suited for exploring the nuances and complexities of a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2005) such as the coaching relationship. The qualitative research process is considered open and flexible and allows for new insights and the discovery of novel themes (Holliday, 2002). The rich description gleaned through this mode of research will help tease out the intricacies of individuals' experiences of good coaching relationships.

More specifically, I will be structuring the study in accordance with Smith, Flowers, and Larkin's (2009) guidelines to conducting Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Smith et al. (2009) describe IPA as a "qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences" (p.1). IPA is based on three central theoretical perspectives: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Figure 1).

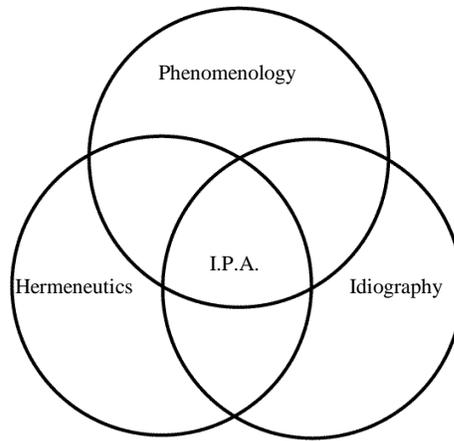


Figure 1: Three Central Perspectives of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

***Research Framework***

Table 1: Summary of Research Framework for this Study.

Philosophy	Phenomenological
Ontology	Social Constructionism
Epistemology	Interpretive (hermeneutics)
Methodology	Qualitative
Approach	Inductive
Research Design	Multi-perspectival study (perspective of coach & coachee)
Method	Semi-structured in-depth interviews

***Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis***

***Central Theoretical Perspectives of IPA***

At the heart of IPA research is the exploration of human experience on its own terms – consequently IPA is phenomenological in nature (Smith et al., 2009). Smith et al. (2009) explain that phenomenology originated as a philosophical approach to understand

the experiential content of consciousness. To put it simply, phenomenologists are interested in the ‘lived experience;’ the nature of experience from the point of view of the person experiencing the phenomenon (Connelly, 2010). IPA researchers “are concerned with where ordinary everyday experience becomes ‘an experience’ of importance as the person reflects on the significance of what has happened and engages in considerable ‘hot cognition’ in trying to make sense of it” (Smith et al., 2009, p.33).

Hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation, is the second major theoretical perspective underlying Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis according to Smith et al. (2009). It was Heidegger, a German philosopher, who explicitly described phenomenology as an interpretative enterprise. Consequently, as researchers attempt to access the participant’s lived experiences, there is an understanding that this cannot be done completely. Participants may have trouble describing what they are thinking or may not want to fully self-disclose. Only through an interpretative process can researchers come close to making sense of the participant’s world. Researchers enter into the ‘hermeneutic circle’ where one moves back and forth in a dynamic process to uncover different perspectives or ways of interpreting the data (Smith et al., 2009).

Concerned with the particular, idiography is the third major theoretical underpinning surrounding IPA according to Smith et al. (2009). IPA researchers focus on a single case study or a small sample to ensure depth of analysis of situated participants in their particular contexts. Through rigorous and systematic analysis, each case is analyzed separately before moving to another. The researcher then examines what is unique to each case and where the cases converge. This commitment to detail allows the researcher to delve deeper into the general phenomenon of interest. Smith et al. (2009)

share a quote from Goethe to reflect the importance of focusing on the particular: “The particular eternally underlies the general; the general eternally has to comply with the particular” (p.31).

### ***Choosing IPA as a Methodology***

IPA was chosen as a methodology in an attempt to uncover the subtleties and nuances of how people experience and make sense of instructional coaching, and the coaching relationship. According to Smith and Osborn (2008), IPA is considered particularly useful when one is interested in complexity, process, or novelty. In this study on instructional coaching and the coaching relationship, there is an interest in all three. Coaching is a complex, nuanced, and situated form of professional development that aims to build relationships and push learning to new heights through the process of the coaching cycle and the novel experiences created within. The subjective experience of the coachee -the perceptions, understandings, views, and possibilities of what it means to be coached and be in a coaching relationship will be explored, described, and interpreted in detail. The experience of the coach will also be examined in a similar fashion. By understanding how these individuals make sense of their experience in a particular context, a more detailed and nuanced analysis showing the convergence and divergence between participants will help gain understanding of the phenomenon in question. Accessing and making sense of these coaching experiences lends itself to such an in-depth approach.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis is especially useful if the topic of investigation is new or under-researched (Smith & Osborn, 2004). This is in accordance

with the present study examining the lived experience of instructional coaching - an under-researched area.

### *Positive Psychology*

In this study, I deliberately chose to focus on the positive lived experiences of instructional coaching – a strengths-based approach. I was particularly interested in what makes some coaching relationships work and thrive as opposed to what makes relationships falter or fail. This does not in any way indicate that the study of the latter has no value or is of lesser importance; it was solely a personal choice. Neither does the positive focus imply that all the coaches and coachees in this study are paragons of virtues without faults or setbacks in their relationships, but rather it is a shift from focusing on weaknesses to a focus on strengths and levels of engagement to gain a clearer understanding of what pushes some coaching relationships to flourish.

In psychology, focusing on the positive is a somewhat recent phenomenon. Historically, psychologists focused on pathology, weakness, and damage. It was only in 1999, that the positive psychology movement got underway, under the agenda of Martin E. P. Seligman, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania. Seligman wanted to change the trajectory of a ‘pathologically focused’ psychology towards a focus on studying strength and virtue and building what is right (Heffernon & Boniwell, 2011). The difference between the two following questions, “Why do these individuals fail?” and “What makes some individuals succeed?” concisely illustrate the difference between post-World War Two psychology and today’s positive psychology (Heffernon & Boniwell, 2011, p.20). Sheldon, Frederickson, Rathunde, and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) in

the 'Akumal Manifesto' describe the aim of positive psychology in this way: "to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive."

In the current study, all participants self-identified their coaching relationships as positive. To get further insight into the inner workings of their relationships, interpretative phenomenological analysis was employed to capture and explore the meanings participants assigned to their individual experiences. Although most IPA studies focus on pathology and pain, Reid, Flowers, and Larkin (2005) suggest that there is space for IPA studies to focus on positive experiences as well:

"In keeping with the broad premise of positive psychology (e.g. Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), there is scope for IPA research to become less disease- and deficit-focused, and for participants to be given a chance to express their views about strength, wellness, and quality of life." (p.21)

Consequently, I embarked on a journey to discover and capture the positive lived experience of instructional coaching and the coaching relationship through IPA in hopes to gain further understanding into what makes these types of relationships flourish.

### ***Research Design***

I explore the lived experiences of those directly involved in instructional coaching. The study is based on semi-structured in-depth interviews of 3 instructional coaches from 3 different secondary schools in a southwestern Ontario school board and a teacher (coachee) from each school who partakes in the coaching cycle with the instructional coach. The interviews took place during the spring of 2012 and focus on the

participants' lived experience of coaching. The interviews were coded to uncover common threads that emerged through the interview process as well as providing an interpretative analysis of the data. My action agenda is to offer insight into what allows coaching relationships to flourish. I also incorporate my narrative to position myself within the context of the research.

### ***Research Question***

What is the lived positive experience of instructional coaching, including the coaching relationship, among secondary teachers (coachees) and the instructional coaches (IC) in a southwestern Ontario school board?

### ***Sample Size/Site/Participant Selection***

Six participants from a southwestern Ontario school board are involved in this study: 3 instructional coaches and 3 secondary teachers (coachees) (See Table 2). The sample is divided in this way so that instructional coaching, and the coaching relationship can be understood from more than one perspective. The secondary instructional coaches (minimum two years experience) were recruited by email on the basis of their self-described positive coaching experiences. For each coach interviewed, there is a corresponding secondary teacher interviewed that has been coached by the instructional coach. These secondary teachers (coachees) also had self-described positive coaching experiences. A separate recruitment email was sent out to teachers (coachees) at the instructional coaches' schools. Once both an instructional coach and a secondary teacher (coachee) from the same school committed, participation was confirmed. The coach did

not ask a teacher (coachee) to participate directly. The selection process was based on matched pairs of volunteers.

Table 2: Coachee and Coach Participant Pairs Demographics

	Coachee	Teaching Experience	Coach	Coaching Experience	Teaching Experience
Relationship #1	Madeline	6 years	Emily	2.5 years	10 years
Relationship #2	Audrey	14.5 years	Kathryn	4 years	Retiring at end of year
Relationship #3	Lauren	5 years	Victoria	3 years	22 years

This small, purposively selected group is important to attain in-depth analysis of the perspectives of these participants as it relates to the phenomenon, instructional coaching and the positive coaching relationship, under study. This is particularly important for my methodological approach to qualitative inquiry: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Under the orientation of IPA, participants should be selected based on their ability to grant access to a particular perspective rather than a population. Therefore, sample sizes are small and fairly homogenous (Smith et al., 2009). The goal is to make the group as uniform as possible so as to “examine in detail psychological variability within the group, by analyzing the pattern of convergence and divergence which arises” (Smith et al., 2009).

In this study, all participants were from one particular Southwestern Ontario school board, all were female, the coaches had a minimum of two years experience with coaching, and both coaches and coachees were asked to participate based on their self-described positive coaching experiences. There was no explanation on the part of the

researcher as to what a positive coaching experience would look or sound like. Positive relationships were chosen as a way to understand the inner workings of coaching relationships where both the coach and coachee had an overall positive experience. By choosing to focus on positive relationships, I had an opportunity to examine relationships that have grown over time and were ongoing, precisely because of this positive relationship. If I focused on those who self-described their relationships as negative, there is the likelihood that these relationships would be brief and not on-going due to the fact that all coaching relationships in this study were voluntary. This study is interested in what is special about these relationships and what can we learn from them in terms of improving coaching relationships and coaching practices. Also, as both an instructional coach for the school board under study and a colleague to those participating, I felt that I would have easier access to coaches and coachees who self-described in a positive way. Although the relationships are described as positive, it does not infer that these relationships are perfect or model examples for all to follow.

Smith et al. (2009) explain that the purpose of choosing a group of participants in this way “is not to privilege this group as the only one that is interesting” (p. 49). A follow-up study could be done on instructional coaches and coachees who had a negative experience with instructional coaching and would be equally important.

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

As this research approach is phenomenological and idiographic in nature, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim with as much detail as possible. The semi-structured interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were conducted at the participant’s school in a quiet room free of distractions at a time convenient (on a

prep period) for both participant and interviewer with the exception of one participant. Madeline preferred to do the interview on a Saturday so as to not have any distractions from work. This interview was conducted at my home at her request. This interview happened at the kitchen table with no one in my home besides Madeline and I. The questions asked in the interview aligned with the central research question.

IPA studies, inductive in approach, attempt to understand how individuals create meaning out of experience (Smith et al., 2009). During the data analysis, there is a move from descriptive to an interpretative understanding. The interpretative analysis offers a perspective that the participant cannot. According to Smith et al. (2009), this 'added value' is considered a product of the systematic and detailed analysis of transcripts, from connections that emerge from the larger data set, and from creating a dialogue between the transcripts and the psychological theory. Smith and Osborn (2008) summarize this process of analyzing data in three key terms: idiographic, inductive, and interrogative. Idiographic in the sense that there is a detailed, nuanced analysis of each particular case; inductive in the sense that the themes emerge from the data as opposed to testing the data against current literature; and interrogative in the sense that the discussion is considered as an extension of the data analysis where the findings are considered in relation to the existing literature.

Although there is no single prescribed method of data analysis for IPA, I have used the steps suggested by Smith et al. (2009) to guide me in analyzing the data. As a novice researcher, I followed these steps quite closely (See Figure 2).

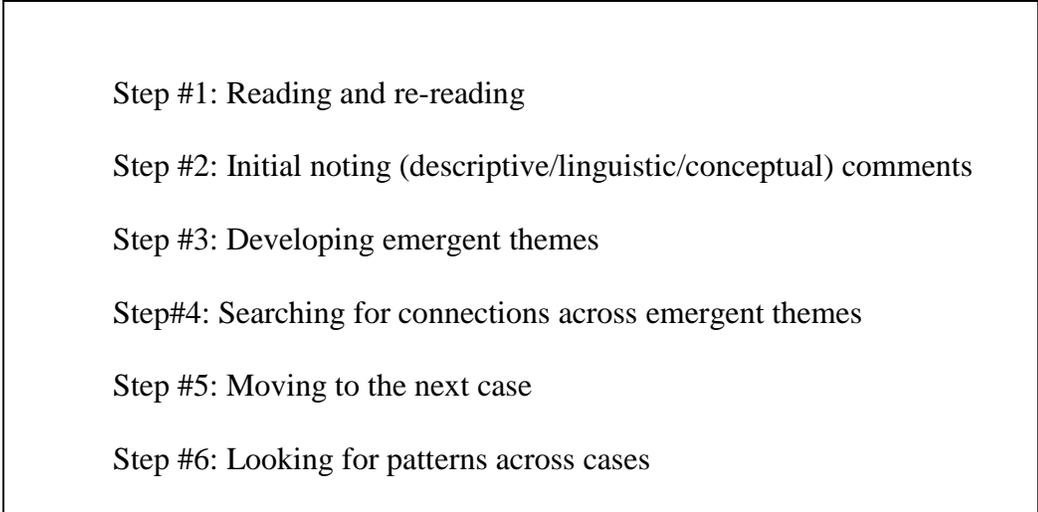
- 
- Step #1: Reading and re-reading
  - Step #2: Initial noting (descriptive/linguistic/conceptual) comments
  - Step #3: Developing emergent themes
  - Step#4: Searching for connections across emergent themes
  - Step #5: Moving to the next case
  - Step #6: Looking for patterns across cases

Figure 2: Steps for the process of analysis in IPA (Smith et al., 2009).

After initial reading and making notes, the data was coded and analyzed to identify emerging themes in each case as they relate to the central research question. Emergent patterns across cases were determined. See Appendix C for samples of initial noting and exploratory comments. To push the analysis beyond summary, the data was analyzed to an interpretative or conceptual level in relation to wider social, cultural, and theoretical contexts (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). Finally, the work developed into a collective narrative, which includes a considerable amount of verbatim transcript extracts to highlight the participants lived experiences. Although the steps outlined above follow a linear sequence, the actual process was much more fluid, moving back and forth between steps as I attempted to make sense of my data.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

The University of Windsor Research Ethics Review Board reviewed this research proposal to ensure that this inquiry is ethical, respectful, and that it focuses on the content that it is intended for, thereby causing no apparent harm to the participants. Prior to introducing the study to teachers and instructional coaches, the school board also

reviewed this research proposal with similar intent ensuring the dignity and privacy of participants. Permission from each principal was also obtained. After permission was granted, participants were informed about the nature of the study and were assured that they may withdraw at any time. I also disclosed my position as a researcher, explained to participants that participation in this study is voluntary; that no benefit will be given to this researcher except the benefit of research alone; and that all board and school policies surrounding research were adhered to for the duration of the study. All interview data is held in a secure location and taped interviews were assigned identity codes to ensure the confidentiality of all participants. Participants were assured that all research, writing, and publication would be anonymous while anticipated benefits and potential hazards would also be explained to the participants. All participants were required to complete a consent form, documenting freely given informed consent to participate in the study, an audio-taping consent form, and were thanked for their participation.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study is to explore job-embedded instructional coaching focusing on the lived experience of the instructional coaching relationship, from the perspective of both the coach and the coachee in the secondary school setting. To accomplish this task, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was chosen as the research methodology to interpret the results.

According to Smith & Osborn (2008), the assumption in IPA is that the researcher is interested in learning about the participant's psychological world through a microanalysis of individual experience. During the data analysis phase of my research, I attempted to enter an interpretative relationship with the transcripts with the hope to gain insight into the content and complexity of the meanings put forth by the participants so as to present actual 'slices of human life.' The sustained engagement with the audiotapes and transcripts allowed me to open up the space for a detailed, nuanced and interpretative account. Grouped by themes as well as pairs (coach/coachee), the idiographic interpretative commentary is interwoven with sizable participant extracts.

To protect the identity of those who participated in the research, pseudo names have been used throughout this document. All participants in this study were female and were from a Southwestern Ontario school board. All quotes transcribed in this document have been taken directly from the raw data.

The following super-ordinate themes were drawn from the qualitative data collected via the semi-structured interviews: Trust (1), Growth (2), Power & Resistance

(3). To examine the inner workings of each theme in specific interpersonal relationships, I will highlight each coach/coachee relationship separately.

### ***Trust***

The experience of being involved in a coaching relationship brought up the notion of trust in all coaches and coachees interviewed. Trust was viewed as an important ingredient for the development and maintenance of these positive professional coaching relationships. Furthermore, trust building does not happen in isolation. Sociocultural factors within the school or school board may affect the readiness of colleagues to develop trusting relationships. Various elements of trust permeate the interviews –notions of comfort, safety, security, vulnerability, apprehension, fear, interdependence, commitment, and reciprocity highlight some of the participants’ personal experiences of trust within these dyadic relationships. The dispositions and behaviours of both individuals in the coaching relationship affect how they think, feel, and behave in situations involving trust. Trying to pin down or articulate how trust is built and maintained is not an easy task. According to Madeline, “it just kind of happened.”

#### ***Relationship 1: Madeline (coachee) and Emily (coach)***

Out of the three pairs of coaches/coachees interviewed, the notion of trust was at the forefront with Emily and Madeline. Emily and Madeline are younger teachers, in their mid-thirties, still in the process of establishing career goals and gaining confidence in their professional work. Their coaching relationship was one of the first built between coach and coachee at their school when the coaching initiative was just getting underway. Time was needed for both Emily and Madeline to let go of personal insecurities, establish

a comfort level, and build an open, trusting relationship between them. Both coach and coachee share their experiences of this trust building process in their relationship.

Upon entering the coaching relationship, Madeline is torn between wanting to learn/try new things and being judged on her teaching ability. Reflecting on her first experience with the coach, Madeline sheds insight into her personal insecurities and how the coach put her at ease:

Oh, well, (cough) I was still a new teacher and I was thinking well, is anyone going to take my classroom? I had a schedule; my schedule was pretty um, overwhelming... for a new teacher. No academic level courses... all applied level courses, very challenging students, and I thought oh God... don't ask me to take the lead... I'm going to look like an idiot in front of you and all these kids. But like I said, just because the conversation we were having... um... and just because she was you know... you know, we're going to try it... it might work, and it might not. Kind of the attitude of the coach kind of put me at ease more.

This fear of failure or as Madeline put it, "looking like an idiot," is something that perfectionists try to avoid at all costs. Emily helps Madeline break free from the 'perfect trap' that so many teachers find themselves in by establishing trust and providing the space for trial and error in her teaching practice.

For Madeline, establishing a comfort level with the coach allowed her apprehensions to subside, her feelings of vulnerability to wane, and cemented the trust between them. Having the confidence to take interpersonal risk by opening up her

classroom and sharing her professional practice suggests Madeline has established a level of trust with the coach:

and it just kind of happened like that and it just felt more comfortable as we were talking and then I just felt like she was a friend of mine and it was a very casual conversation, I didn't feel any pressure, I didn't feel any kind of judgment of any kind and I just kind of thought oh okay this is going to be kind of cool because she's going to be with me and it's always kind of cool to have like a team-teacher with you and it just kind of, those apprehensions just kind of melted away, it wasn't a big deal for me after we had that first meeting and then, and she really just kind of let me take the lead on what it was that I wanted to get the kids to know, and we talked about, like we planned out an entire week of how we were going to start things and what, and how we were going to refresh the kids memories.

By Emily taking a team-teacher approach, Madeline had the reassurance knowing that whether it works or not, both parties are responsible. Madeline's description of her apprehensions "melting away" suggests that she was now open and ready to share her practice with another. This collaborative space fosters further creativity and risk-taking for both parties involved.

Madeline and Emily make clear that there is a high degree of trust in their coaching relationship at this point. Madeline emphasizes that she shares similar values/philosophy with the coach. This, she feels, allows her to trust the coach and enables the coaching relationship to flourish:

So those kind of things happen in the relationship that sort of makes it... you know, quality like she gets me, and I get her because we have the same life experiences so when we bring that to teaching... because you bring your life experience to everything you do... when you bring that to teaching you bring that same philosophy with you... so I can trust her with my class... like I know that if I weren't there and she had to deliver the unit... she would do it the way I would do it because we have the same sort of value system so I trust her with my class, I trust her with my kids, I trust that she will make my kids as successful as I would want them to be, right? So that kind of speaks volume for the sort of relationship with the coach.

Madeline places a great deal of emphasis on the fact that she can trust Emily with her students, which she says, “speaks volumes” for their relationship. Here you get the sense that Madeline considers her students similar to her own kids –not just anyone would be considered trustworthy enough to take care of them. Emily makes the cut.

Describing her relationship with Emily, Madeline emphasizes the equality and the reciprocity of the relation:

... Um, her job is sort of to... get the ideas and bring them to the school. And my job is sort of, okay, “how can we implement these ideas into my classroom.” So I sort of think of it as a symbiotic relationship; we both benefit, because she goes to these workshops and she sees these ideas or hears these things from these professionals... but, you know a workshop isn't going to tell you... how... what's that going to look like in a 1P English class... you don't know that from a

workshops... But then, when she brings these ideas to me and I put it into my 1P English class, then we look at things and we can say, you know...

Madeline's description of the coaching relationship as 'symbiotic' suggests a degree of interdependence between coach and coachee. She sees the coach as having more theoretical knowledge along with a slew of instructional strategies; however, she feels the coach does not have a complete practical knowledge of how these tools get put into practice. Madeline feels the coach needs a classroom to help determine the effectiveness of the instructional strategies and how to best implement them into practice. This is something the coachee can help to establish with the coach and both parties gain from this interaction. A mutually beneficial relationship helps to establish a level of trust between both parties and establish a partnership:

When she leaves me and she goes and works with another teacher, it's going to be better for that other teacher because they've had the experience... because she's had that experience through me... So yah, she gets something out of being in my class just as I get something from her in my class. So, it's a real partnership, I think, and I think it's beneficial to everybody and it benefits everybody down the line. Because the next time she implements that idea those kids are going to gain benefit because she sees how the scenario runs in a real class... you know?

When Madeline explains that the coach will be able to see "how the scenario runs in a 'real' class," there is an insinuation that much of what the coach brings to the table is theoretically based. To Madeline, it appears that only by applying the theory to practice in a 'real classroom' is there the possibility to judge whether or not the instructional

strategy is effective. This viewpoint allows Madeline to feel more of an equal within the coaching relationship as she has something of value to share with the coach. It also suggests that Madeline is not comfortable with the fact that there may be some implied hierarchy between coach and coachee in a school setting.

Emily, like Madeline, emphasizes the equality of both the coach and coachee in the coaching relationship:

So I can trust her just as much I think as she can trust me. Um, in that way she's not going to go up to that person and say, "hey, she wants to know if you can work with me?" I think that part of it; I think the trust is really built between us. Um, more so, you know, and we're equals. We were equals from the beginning but I think even more so, um, I know she's also looking to be - she wants to be a department head of English. She's looking for chances to sort of have a leadership role and, um, she said to me, you know, "if you need things presented and if you need things you know, I'm in," kind of thing. And even though she is looking to become a department head, it's genuine as well. She really wants to be a leader in the building and she's willing to sort of try the strategies even if other people in her department are not or if not everybody in the school wants to, so she's, you know, one of the advocates I guess, um, for the coaching positions for sure.

As highlighted here, Emily explains that she sees Madeline as more of an equal due to the fact that Madeline is looking to take on leadership roles in the future just as she has taken on the leadership role as instructional coach. Emily identifies with her as someone she can trust to be an advocate for her work - someone to stand by her side with similar goals.

Emily specifically made note of Madeline's interest in becoming a department head as 'genuine' suggests that she feels many people enter leadership roles for the 'wrong' reasons – typically in the school setting this suggests that some teachers who take on leadership roles are more interested in power, money, or 'climbing the ladder', not in truly improving the practice of teachers or fostering student success. Emily is also interested in taking on added roles of responsibility, which may be one of the reasons she references Madeline as being genuine as she sees her own goals in this way. This reference to being genuine is also something that Emily herself appears to be struggling with as she navigates her role as coach. She mentions that many staff members feel she is too closely associated with administration. This adds difficulty in garnering trust among staff:

I think they just think I'm too busy. I don't think they um I don't think they necessarily how should I put it I don't think they look down upon it but I think they see me as being very busy um sometimes I think we're seen more I don't want to say as administration but um we have a closer tie to administration maybe because we're pulled out so often and sometimes we attend PD with administration they see us interacting more with administration so maybe that's that part of it they could think we're not on their side so to speak.

As Emily attempts to describe what she feels the teachers are thinking, it sheds some light onto her personal struggles she faces within her role. Saying that she doesn't feel teachers 'look down upon it' or see her as "not on their side" suggests that maybe some do. She seems to be trying to negate those lingering feeling which may be affecting the ability for trust to occur with certain individuals at her school.

Emily continues to reflect on why teachers may have a problem with her being closely tied to administration:

... you know maybe for some people it depends on the relationship they have with the principal and maybe if they don't like the principal then there must be something wrong with me...or I can't trust her because you know, she...

Here Emily sheds insight that the principal may not be well liked at her school and a strong association/relationship with that individual could be detrimental to building trust.

She further reflects on why teachers feel this way and where the disconnect might lie:

sometimes it gets hard because it think you're so busy you don't actually take a specific sit down lunch and sometimes I think that's where there's a disconnect or um they may see me sitting working with the principal in his office um but they didn't see me much all that day because I was flying all around and maybe I was in somebody's classroom but they didn't see me at lunch hour and I think I have to make that effort to make sure I'm there for those social things even though sometimes it is hard to make the time for that um, I think that an important part of the job to try and make that time.

Emily comes to the realization that perception may be the problem and she expresses a need to make time and effort to socialize with the staff to try to dispel the myths and garner trust.

As a coach, Emily understands the importance of building open, trusting relationships with teachers and sees it as the definition of a successful relationship, "I guess that open, trusting relationship that's built between the coach and the coachee is the

part that I would say, you know, is the success.” She realizes how difficult it is for teachers to open up about their professional teaching practice and share their struggles:

I guess trust is huge because they have to be able to come to you and if they say that they’re having a problem in the classroom that you know it’s not like you’re going to go tell everybody that you’re struggling with the class.

However, Emily goes on to share that “sometimes they trust [her] too much.” She references that teachers go to her to vent about new initiatives taking place at the school as well as directly about the administration. She is frustrated with the amount of negativity that she has to deal with at times and doesn’t want to take sides:

So nasty, they were just nasty around here. There was one day I just came in here and shut my door. My light was on and I shut the door because I thought I cannot walk in that hallway because people would find me and just crap, crap.

Here Emily vividly expresses how the teachers can make her feel when they are unhappy with something taking place in the school. She metaphorically feels ‘dumped on.’ The weight of the burdens causes her to retreat into her office and close the door. Sometimes, according to Emily, there can be too much of a good thing –trust included.

***Relationship 2: Kathryn (coachee) and Audrey (coach)***

While Madeline and Emily focused heavily on the issue of trust, Kathryn and Audrey seem to focus less on the need for trust, although they clearly had a strong sense of trust in their relationship. Audrey only mentions the word trust when she explains the relationship between Kathryn and the principal, “admin trusts coach.” She feels that the

administration has confidence in Kathryn and trusts her as a professional by not interfering with her work:

...they, you know, they trust that they are really professionals. They have to make their logs and they have to respond and they have to evaluate the teacher and the TLTT has to evaluate whether or not that, um, activity that they did helped or did not help. So, they have to make their own assessment, so I think the administration would probably just trust.

Kathryn reiterates the level of trust and support she shares with the principal:

...sometimes, I'll go in and say, um, this month I've been trying to do this but I just, you know, I just haven't had the time, I've been working on this instead and you know, he never gives me grief. He's always like, you need to do what you need to do!

As you can see, the principal respects Kathryn's professional judgment and trusts her to fulfill her duties as a coach in the way she sees fit. This supportive attitude allows the coach to feel autonomous and more confident in her role. Listen to Kathryn talk about her principal:

Oh he's always been phenomenal... I have to say he has been extremely supportive. Anytime I've wanted a resource he'll say, "get two!" Haha, I think he's understood right from the start um and I've never been in an awkward position which makes it really nice too...because I've heard other people say like the principal has said "I want you to work with these people"... like he's never said that to me... and I felt too, for myself, an accountability piece was to see him

and say oh... so I've been working on this particular strategy or you'll never guess what happened in so and so's room... we did this phenomenal thing you want to come see? And um, I remember when "foldables" (note-taking strategy) first came in and he came to the PD with us and I was doing foldables actually with the person that you're going to be talking to, and the principal came up with his on foldable and pretended that he was using a foldable to keep track of his own notes and so the kids thought that was pretty fun and so he's been on board and really supportive so... um...

Kathryn compares her experience with the principal at her school with that of other coaches' experience with administration. She realizes that her situation is not so common amongst the different schools in the board. She seems to want to show the principal her thanks by ensuring she keeps him up-to-date on what she is doing –the 'accountability piece.' Their relationship appears to be very healthy and supportive. The principal, by actively participating with his 'foldable' (note-taking strategy) during the lesson mentioned above, shares with both staff and students that he values what they are doing and is willing to take risks as well. This goes far in building trust within the school and establishing a culture of collaboration.

While interviewing both Audrey and Kathryn I felt a strong sense of confidence in their teaching practice. Both are seasoned veterans in the teaching profession and had a particular joie de vivre that seemed to explain their need to make magic happen in the classroom by collaborating and trying new things. Their confidence and positive dispositions appear to allow trust to form rather naturally and easily between them. Audrey describes Kathryn, a creative writing/English teacher in this way, "But I think

that a personality –open, um, non-judgmental, uh, kind of like, she’s got a kindness about her too you know the kids to the teachers anyway there’s a big comfort.” This description of Kathryn is of marked importance, as Audrey is the only one in this study to bring up ‘kindness’ as a key trait in a coach. She describes the comfort the kindness brings to both students and teachers. Kindness brings us closer to one another and opens up the space for risk-taking and trust.

Audrey explains the importance of the coach being non-judgmental in order for the coaching relationship to flourish. She seems to look up to the coach and values her as a person as well as a professional. Audrey is comfortable with Kathryn in a leadership role, such as coaching, as she sees her as a credible and genuine teacher. Her comments also suggest that Kathryn has a positive reputation in the school as a whole:

...I can ask her anything and she's not going to judge me if I don't know how to do something... It's a good relationship. She like I said she's not a judgmental person and she's a good teacher obviously she taught for how many years and everyone loves her she's a good teacher to the students and a good teacher to teachers. So um it's been a really good I'm glad I'm actually very happy that's she was chosen to be the TLTT start off you couldn't have made a better choice for all the teachers really.

Building trust is not a simple process and laying the foundation for trust doesn't happen overnight. Set to retire at the end of the year when this interview was taken, Kathryn's reputation preceded her work as a coach and created an easier transition for her

to generate interest in coaching compared to younger coaches who have to build trust from scratch:

... I guess because I've been here so long it's actually my 3<sup>rd</sup> school but, um, because I know everyone I'm pretty comfortable here and I think that's what made it good for coaching... because I knew everyone and everyone knew me.

Although, Kathryn is aware of the advantages she had going into coaching at her school, she is quite nostalgic of her first experience as a coach and how that set the stage for others to follow suit. Kathryn references a funny video she saw at a professional development session about a guy dancing on a hill. She explains that the guy is dancing all by himself at a concert and someone else gets up to join him. After that more and more people start dancing and eventually everyone is up on their feet. She likens the dancing guy's first follower to Audrey, who was her very first coachee. Kathryn mentions that it was actually Audrey that approached her first. Here is Kathryn's explanation of the video:

...they say the first follower is the most important because they show that it's easy to do you know?, that they are willing to take a risk and that you believe in them and so they say in that video that the first person that follows is the most important person because after that a few more people get up and a few more people get up and before you know it you look stupid sitting down because everyone's up dancing and that's what you want as a coach...you want everyone doing those things.”

In this description of the video, the first follower stands out. He or she is “willing to take a risk” and believes “that you believe in them.” Therefore, the first follower is both naturally trustworthy and sees that you have faith in his/her abilities, which makes the person feel uplifted and ready to, metaphorically speaking, step up to the dance floor. This is an apt description for Audrey. Kathryn sheds further insight into Audrey’s motivation to become the ‘first follower:’

...but when I think of what motivated her...she’s very creative...she’s very open...she’s not in the same subject area as I am at all...and I was very pleased when she asked me...and I think part of it was that she’s always looking for new ways to reach the kids.

Although Kathryn does not make mention of this, she has a lot in common with the guy out there dancing alone just as Audrey shares qualities with the first follower. She is naturally confident, outgoing, fun, and has, perhaps, more faith in the abilities of others than they have in themselves. All of which makes her easy to trust. At times during the interview, she likens her role to that of a cheerleader –someone who lifts up the spirit and energy of another.

Along with being a first follower, Kathryn cherishes the relationship with Audrey because they share similar teaching philosophies. Both are very open and creative, committed to their relationship, and share a common love of working with kids –laying the foundation for trust to thrive, “Um I think what is fun about that is um when she approaches me, we are already on the same page about it...we are always like remember that time we did that!”

***Relationship 3: Lauren (coachee) and Victoria (coach)***

Lauren and Victoria's relationship had an interesting beginning and the foundation of trust was laid long before Victoria first coached Lauren. Victoria is a seasoned English teacher and Lauren is a relative 'newbie' (5 years experience)– who was taught by Victoria in high school:

I feel because she is a new teacher... not a brand new teacher, but new, and I feel as a mentor I actually taught her as well so that's a different level... um so yah... so I mean we get along personality wise so we have a lot of things in common but um... it just I feel like I am in a mentor position as well and I feel that she has a lot I can learn a lot from her as well so it's definitely a two way relationship.

Here Victoria describes her role as that of a mentor for Lauren. She is the only coach in the study to describe herself in this way –presumably this is due to her previous relationship with Lauren and their significant age gap. A mentor is generally seen as someone who is older, wiser, and can pass on knowledge and share his or her experiences. Usually a mentor is considered a less formal role than that of coach. It appears that regardless if Victoria was in the role of coach or not, she would informally be Lauren's mentor in the school. In fact, Lauren mentions that Victoria supported her “before she was TLTT.” Lauren looks up to Victoria and values her experience –“she knows her stuff, you know?”

Victoria explaining that she can learn a lot from Lauren suggests that she has a high respect for Lauren's professional practice even though she was once her high school

English teacher. This respect generates trust in the relationship. Lauren further shares that despite their age gap, they have a lot in common and share similar professional values:

I mean it's a great relationship we are very much friends and I think even though there's a very big age gap I think we're in the same time in our lives for teachers and moms and um we have the same perspective on our students at school like we really want them to succeed... especially kids that could potentially fall through the cracks. I mean and she has French like a teachable as well so that's helpful that I know that she's you know understands both of my teachable's... my subject areas... um, yah and so we just if I'm yah I don't know I guess all of those things just make it a very positive easy relationship she's easy to find you know when I need... like she's very available like when I want to meet with her um...

There is a sense here that Victoria not only provides professional knowledge but also offers a sense of comfort and security for Lauren. This is evident when Lauren brings up the importance of availability. She can trust Victoria to be there when she needs her. She feels Victoria is empathetic and is willing to lend an ear:

It's very much like friends and like zero-judgment, like I can say a kid really ticked me off...like I can say anything and she's not going to say like you really should have addressed that differently...it's more like oh...I know...like there is empathy like "I remember when I had a student and they did this..."

It is clear that the empathy Victoria shares with Lauren helps to create bonds of trust. Lauren respects Victoria's authenticity in the coaching role. She sees the value that Victoria offers to teachers unlike other teachers she sees in similar positions:

so she was very supportive and brought lots of resources and materials and so then I knew that you know she wasn't just in this position to save a body... like I'm sure some people are... she wasn't just in this position to have an easier workload like some librarians are, you know? She was really wanting to do it for the... and you know she had the resources and you know the experience to be able to provide the answers... so that's, knowing that is why I actually use her as a resource and go to her and say, like I said today... how do I work this out... because I know that she'll have a good answer for me... not just you know... whatever some, something that's not going to be helpful.

Lauren's comment that Victoria "wasn't just in this position to save a body" or "to have an easier workload," suggests that she has been disheartened in the past with others who were in the role for the wrong reasons. She trusts Victoria because she has proven her genuine intentions to her. Lauren goes on to explain what really makes her want to work with someone:

So, so I would say when the person themselves is enthusiastic and you know they have credibility and they themselves want real 'student success'... um then that energizes me to then want to work with them or to do the same or put extra time into it because I know that it's for the right reasons.

The phrases, "real student success" and "for the right reasons," again highlights the authenticity Lauren feels is necessary for her to buy-in to the coaching experience and trust the coach.

In contrast to her positive relationship with Victoria, Lauren shares some earlier negative experiences in her school that almost made her disengage from her work and become disillusioned with the system. Although Lauren had a great relationship with her principal who encouraged her to get involved, she was not so lucky with others in senior positions. She describes her disappointment with the vice-principal:

And so it was sort of frustrating that we had collected all this data and we had been away from our classrooms to organize all this and then the VP kind of did it to become a principal...but we didn't actually implement anything in our school for student success, so you get a bit disillusioned, you know? When you think you're going to create all these great things.

Here you can see that Lauren is starting to lose faith in the motivations of others. She trusted that the VP would live up to his end of the bargain by making a commitment to improve student success. However, his motivations lied elsewhere, and a loss of trust followed suit.

Meeting Lauren for the first time in this interview, I was immediately impressed with her fervor for professional learning and her natural confidence in her abilities. She was not your typical young teacher. During our conversation, she had a psychological/philosophical way of addressing issues. She had insight into what lies at the heart of many of the problems and challenges she faced at school. For someone like Lauren, authenticity is important. She was in it for the right reasons and she was actively seeking out like-minded individuals who would share her passions and collaborate

together. For her, Victoria was humble and someone she could trust, although she shares some insight on why others may not feel the same way:

Like I think other people might feel differently, like it's not on the same level... but that's their own personal insecurity... and that Victoria is not the type of person to make herself feel... like make it seem like she's better than anyone else but I think it is partly the person who is getting the help as well like they decide whether they are going to feel comfortable or insecure in that relationship”

Lauren highlights an important point here - the ability to trust another is not something that is solely contingent on one party. It takes ‘two to tango’ so to speak. No matter how trustworthy the coach may be, it is also up to the coachee to step up to the plate and let his or her guard down if he or she wants to grow professionally. Individual levels of insecurity may interfere with the process and may affect whether or not people decide to engage or disengage in the coaching process and whether or not trust is established within the coaching relationship. This may explain why all coaches and coachees in this study felt that, for coaching to work, teachers should enter coaching relationships on their own volition, in lieu of being mandated by administration.

### *Summary of Trust*

Time and time again, coaches and coachees feel that involvement in coaching should be a voluntary professional development activity for true growth to take place and for happy, healthy, and trusting relationships to form. All coachees in this study actively sought out coaching and were ready to take the plunge into their professional growth from the outset. Across all three cases, the coachees were early adopters of the initiative

and were among the first coaching relationships established with coaches in their respective schools. These early successes, or ‘first followers’ as Kathryn describes them, are important to set the stage for others to follow suit.

Along with early entry into coaching relationships, all coachees and coaches in this study share similar values/teaching philosophies and a common interest in the success of their students and this common thread helped to establish and build trust in each coaching relationship.

As all three coaches were teachers at their respective schools before taking on the coaching role, there were pre-established relationships amongst staff that helped to lay the foundation of trust for the coach. Coaches, like Kathryn, for example, on the onset of retirement, have an established reputation as a classroom teacher long before becoming a coach. This definitely impacted the ease with which she entered coaching relationships as Audrey explains that, “everyone loves her.” This kind of pre-established trust takes years to build. In both cases 2 (Audrey & Kathryn) and 3 (Lauren & Victoria), the relationships seemed to be long established before the coaching relationship began. This may be one of the reasons that there was less of a focus on trust, as it seemed to be previously established, while in case 1 (Madeline & Emily) there was a greater focus on trust as Madeline was a new teacher to the school at the time of her initial coaching experience.

Another factor of marked importance is individual dispositions when establishing trust. One example is individual self-esteem or levels of security/insecurity. When comparing relationships across all three cases, both the coach and the coachee in case 1 (Madeline & Emily) seem to be the most insecure in their abilities. This may be due to

the fact that they are still working to gain confidence in their professional work, while both coaches and coachees in case 2 (Kathryn & Audrey) and 3 (Lauren & Victoria) seem more confident and secure in their abilities and the direction of their relationship. Insecurity can get in the way of risk-taking and make it more difficult to fully enter into open, trusting relationships. Trust seems to be more easily established in the relationships where the individuals involved are confident, secure, and willing to open up their practice to others.

Due to the levels of comfort and security that need to be established for coaching relationships to flourish, all the coachees in this study share how important it is for the coach to be non-judgmental. This opens up the space for vulnerability and risk-taking that would not surface if the coach did not establish this safe environment free of judgment. Lauren explains that she feels that there is “zero judgment” in her relationship with Victoria, so much so that she can “say anything” and the empathy that Victoria shares offers a sense of comfort. Audrey describes Kathryn as having a “kindness about her” that provides a “big comfort.” In contrast, as a coach, Madeline, although she understands the importance of being non-judgmental, shared some frustration related to the amount of venting people bombard her with regarding new initiatives at school and with administration.

The relationship with administration, particularly, the principal plays a pivotal role in the building of trusting coaching relationships. This is reflected across all three cases in this study. In both cases one and three, both coaches, Emily and Victoria, have to fight off the assumptions that they are too closely associated with administration. This association in these particular cases is considered negative and hinders trust formation

amongst staff. Emily experiences cognitive dissonance as she tries to reconcile her relationship with the principal and that of staff. Victoria, by contrast, works hard to dispel the myth that she is an extension of administration and ensures staff realize that she does not buy in to every initiative that comes off his desk. In both these cases, a strong association/relationship with the principal can be detrimental to building trust amongst colleagues. However, this does not come up as an issue for Kathryn in case two as her principal trusts her professional judgment, is supportive, and also shows staff that he values what they are doing by participating in the risk-taking with them. His outward support allows for further buy-in from staff and promotes a culture of collaboration. The principal plays a pivotal role in how coaching is perceived at a school.

### ***Growth***

All participants in this study consider increased confidence and professional growth valuable outcomes of the coaching experience. The supportive and reciprocal nature of the coaching relationships described by the participants in this study allows the coaches and coachees to grow into their ideal professional self. Everyone is at different stages in the growth process, and some experience roadblocks outside of their coaching relationship, but all share their feelings of progress in their growth as a teacher. As a result, the need for validation was stronger in some on the trajectory for growth than others. It is important to note that the coaching relationship does not exist in isolation, therefore, within the sociocultural context of the school and the school board, what happens in the coaching relationship can have an affect on other members of the school as well as vice versa. Each discourse community can ultimately influence the learning that takes place in the coaching relationship and the school as a whole. Although some

coaches and coachees experienced setbacks as they tried to create professional learning communities, all participants in this study shared the importance of the ‘ripple effect’ that occurred in their schools which helped the staff to grow professionally.

***Relationship 1: Madeline (coachee) and Emily (coach)***

In the relationship between Madeline and Emily, there is a sense that both coach and coachee need validation on their journey through the coaching experience. Madeline shares some insight:

... you’re on your own, you’re on the wire by yourself, so the coach sort of gives you that additional support, do you know what I mean?... so they say, yah, kind of, you know validate you kind of in a way but and I don’t mean... validate like yah you’re great but yes what you’re doing is going to be effective... like you are getting your message to your kids... yah. So, it’s good, like for me I’ve learned quite a bit from my coach.

Many high school teachers feel isolated in the profession as Madeline describes here. They teach behind closed doors and are nervous to admit if they are facing struggles in the classroom. Newer teachers feel that they are supposed to be equipped from the faculty of education to teach effectively but few who enter teaching have real confidence in their abilities as a teacher and are unsure if they are actually being effective. It seems that it is the most passionate teachers are the ones who struggle the most attempting to be an ideal teacher and are the hardest on themselves. The stress is palpable. Madeline sheds some insight into how the coach helped her gain confidence and validated what she is doing in the classroom:

That has certainly given me more confidence as a teacher, I think it just proves, you know when you're a teacher, especially when you're a new teacher you tend to be very... um, self-conscious I guess is the way I would say it, because you think that you're doing everything you're supposed to be doing but then you're afraid that you're not... so having a coach in your room sort of lets you know you're in the right ball park... do you know what I'm saying? Like when someone sits down with you and says you know I think that's a great idea, right?

In addition, many teachers struggle to keep on top of all the new initiatives laid out by the Ministry of Education and the school board, especially since there is little support to ensure implementation. Madeline shares her frustrations, "Well...it...sort of, sometimes you know...it's a little bit overwhelming because it's like every time you turn the corner there is a new PLC, there's a new ...there's a new..." Although Madeline finds the amount of professional development overwhelming, she sees the rippling effect it has on the school as a whole. Madeline explains, "It spreads out throughout the school."

You get the sense that Madeline wants to learn more but questions how anyone can be on top of all that is suggested by administration and the Ministry of Education while attempting to get a handle on the curriculum, "...you know we do have a curriculum to teach, and yes we...we...we can't...we do want the kids to be successful but we have to be careful that we're not watering down the curriculum."

Many teachers, like Madeline, are concerned over rigor in their classes. Learning how to incorporate many different instructional strategies while ensuring proper coverage

of the curriculum is a skill in and of itself. Some teachers assume that each new initiative just waters down the curriculum they are supposed to be covering. However, once the skills are in place and teachers feel comfortable, they slowly realize how the strategies can actually help them to thoroughly cover what they need to teach.

Without proper planning, implementation and support from administration or choosing research-based strategies, this feat cannot be accomplished and leaves teachers overwhelmed and the students confused. The added stress just pushes teachers to fall back on their instincts and teach their courses the way they were taught to them –which is typically ‘talk and chalk.’ With release time, support, and gradual release, teachers can more fully understand the benefits of the instructional strategies shared with them.

Emily explains that she understands that teachers may need some validation to help them feel more comfortable and release their apprehensions during the coaching process. Teachers want to feel that they are doing a good job –they need a cheerleader:

Um, I think because we sort of validated each other's beliefs I think as a approach maybe somebody not um who's a little bit more reluctant I guess I sort of approach it from um a stand point that they actually they have something to offer me. Um and start with validating things that they do to know that I am seeing the good that they do and I know they care about their kids um and really sort of I guess yah be like the ra ra person for them.

Although Emily realizes that teachers need validation, her use of the word ‘actually’ suggests that she has to make a conscious effort to see the good in the practice of reluctant teachers.

Getting into the classrooms of teachers isn't an easy process for coaches and Emily explains how people like Madeline help to validate what she is trying to do as a coach:

but I guess knowing that there's people like Madeline in the building that even if you're having a day where you know you're trying to get into a classroom trying to get into a department and it's not working, knowing that there are people like Madeline that are really believe in your job and believe that the things that you're doing help kids.

The growth process that occurs in the coaching relationship is much more accelerated than what might occur if a teacher is going at it alone. Madeline reflects on this:

but I don't think my learning curve... I don't think I would have gone up that learning curve quite as quickly if I didn't have a coach... because the nice things about having a coach... is that you really do have like two heads... I honestly believe that having two heads is better than one, right? And yes maybe I could have come to those things but I wouldn't have gotten there as soon as I did, you know?

Madeline shares her growth as a teacher:

Well, I mean my teaching has changed quite a bit, at the beginning you don't really know how to teach like it's a process... when you start teaching you're on an uphill climb... like its brutal like this uphill climb like I'm probably still there... but I'm farther up the hill than I was when I first started but I know at

least I'm going in the right direction, and I know that at the end of the semester that my kids are actually getting what I want them to get, they're learning what I want them to learn, and some lessons are better than other lessons and some ideas of the coaches have given me, have been fantastic and I've used them again and again and again and some of the other things that didn't work well, I've learned to modify them so it's made me far more flexible as a teacher, able to think on my feet able to change things... able to recognize when something isn't going well and, and to know that... well okay, they didn't get that... that lesson was a flop, so what can I do to make that better... so absolutely its' made my teaching a lot better, I think.

Madeline vividly captures her beginning journey as a teacher by calling it a brutal uphill climb. You can feel the weight of her words – the burdens and struggles she faced as a new teacher. As she continues to explain her growth process, her words lighten and there is a sense of growth and resilience when she speaks. Towards the end, Madeline describes how she now has the ability to adapt, to 'think on her feet,' and to reflect on her practice. Ending with 'I think,' Madeline suggests that she is still uncertain if she is where she needs or wants to be in her teaching practice, but this can be seen as a sign of a true reflective practitioner who always sees potential for growth and reflects on what they do.

One of the benefits of this growth process is that Madeline now feels confident not only in her teaching practice but in her ability to share what she has learned with others:

so, you share them because you have the confidence after working with your coach to say, especially if you're a new teacher in the department, to say, I think this is a really worthwhile, I really think this would be good to share and then you find that and then you become more collaborative within your department because you have that collaborative relationship with your coach.

Madeline's newfound confidence allows her to open up her teaching practice with others and, in turn, starts a ripple effect in the school. Emily shares that this increased sharing of professional practice is happening more often. She explains that teachers have become more comfortable sharing due to their individual coaching experience –creating a ripple effect throughout the school. Emily recounts her feelings of excitement knowing that changes have been made for the better in her school:

But, I guess it's the excitement that you see how things have changed in your building how people were pretty standoffish and people were, you know, not sure if they wanted to try something new and, you know, now you see people talking to each other and you know there's pride its I was talking about it being like the mama bear um people come to see you and show you that they did this in their classroom and you know it feels good it feels yah, its exciting its all the hard work that you're putting in is making a difference.

Here, Emily takes ownership of the changes taking place in her school. Referring to herself as 'mama bear,' Emily is protective of the people she works with and proud of their accomplishments which are ultimately reflective of her own. The term also hints at her perceived role as head of the group.

Not only do the teachers share more due to their coaching experience as noted above, some gain the confidence to act like what Emily refers to as ‘mini-coaches:’

Oh, it’s awesome. It’s just they can share amongst each other and it’s almost like yah, mini coaches in the building. Um and there’s been times where I’ve been asked you know “I would like to go into another teachers class and show them how to use clickers? Would you mind coming in and watching my class while I go over there?”

Teachers feeling comfortable enough to act like ‘mini-coaches’ suggests that they have gained sufficient confidence and comfort level with particular instructional strategies. This is rather telling of the progress the coach has made with particular individuals. The ripple effect that ensues throughout the school amplifies the successes of the coach. It is interesting that Emily uses the term ‘mini-coaches’ as it is somewhat diminutive, especially since she calls herself ‘mama bear.’ The other coaches in the study also agree that the coachees they work with have the potential to be coaches but they are not described in this way.

If it wasn’t for her growth as a coach, the increased confidence she has gained during the process of coaching, and the rippling effect she has seen throughout the school, Emily explains she might not have been able to deal with some of the negativity:

I’ve approached some people and have said, “hey, would you like to work together?” and have heard, “absolutely not” and its like, oh my gosh, you’re mean or you’ll send an email to somebody and say, “would you mind? I would love to work with you this semester” and getting a reply that says, “no.” (laughs)

thinking, oh my gosh. But being confident enough to still be able to say ok that's one person's view and I know how beneficial it is to work with another teacher so you go and ask somebody else. Um and I guess at the beginning if I had nobody that said yes you know and I kept hearing no no no no it would have been horrible. I don't think I would had that same confidence to know that you know if everybody's not buying in and everybody's not loving it that I'm doing something wrong, um really I guess you know being able to put yourself out there because really they're putting themselves out there when I'm in their classroom. So I should be able to do the same.

Hearing Emily laugh after explaining some of the negative responses she has endured suggests that she is confident enough in her practice to not let the negativity get the best of her. She comes to the realization that if she expects the teachers to put themselves out there that it is only fair that she do the same.

On the path of growth, many flirt with the need to be perfect. Emily shares her experience learning how to open up her practice and realize that she doesn't need to be perfect in her role as coach:

I've had to, in my coaching role, I've had to say well I've tried this in my class and it didn't work and people have to know that I'm not perfect and I'm willing to have somebody else in my classroom as well and sort of you know even just presenting at PD, um as coaches we put ourselves out there I guess and you know hope we don't get things thrown at us and things were presenting new ideas you know I guess doing that more often being in another teachers classroom more

often. Um teaching in another teachers classroom because they're watching you teach as well um, and really learning I guess from each other because if that person said oh that jus really didn't go over well, well yah I didn't and you know I presented it so what did I do next what can I do different next time? I guess just being open to realizing we don't have to be perfect and when we teach if it doesn't work perfectly the first time then ok what can we do to fix it and being able to go to my colleagues and say you know what can I try? What can I do? Um you know you got another to share? You know I think those made me more comfortable I guess as a team teacher, or a team player in terms of the school instead of this is my classroom.

The change process is messy, people get defensive, Emily explains, "Things get thrown at us." As Emily works with teachers to change and fine-tune their practice, she, in turn, begins reflecting on her own professional practice. She is beginning to realize that the road to success is not a smooth one and authenticity is more important than trying to be perfect. She has to set an example for the staff if she is going to ask them to open up their practice to her.

***Relationship 2: Kathryn (coachee) and Audrey (coach)***

Audrey and Kathryn seem to share a similar heightened awareness regarding their teaching practices due to their coaching experience. Kathryn, in particular, was feeling rather reflective and nostalgic during this interview, as it was her last few months before retirement. Although she considered herself a good teacher, she felt her last four years as a coach allowed her to become much better not only as a coach but as a teacher:

I was a good teacher but I think now I'm a really good teacher, yeah. And I wish that I would have had a coach when I started, you know, somebody would have said, "Oh no, you don't want to do it this way, you know, here's another idea, try it this way." There were a lot of times where I felt the things I was doing weren't effective, you know, you finish marking a test and you know what happened here and you're trying to analyze it yourself but, boy, it would be so nice to have somebody come in and not be evaluating you and say...

Kathryn reflects on how much she would have enjoyed having a coach herself earlier in her career when she was questioning her own effectiveness as a teacher. She also shares how much she values the time allotted for all the instructional coaches to work together on their own professional learning and share best practices. She is somewhat saddened that much of this time has been taken away from the coaches as of late:

Exactly... yah and I mean things change... but I think that PD is like... such an essential... because once you get back in your own school uh, there isn't anybody else... there...um ... so I'm trying this but the teachers are not really too sure...(Kathryn)

Here Kathryn sheds some insight into the isolating nature of the role. Although she works with her teaching colleagues all day, she is the sole coach in the building. That means that Kathryn only has contact with her fellow coaches during monthly meetings and through email. In a role that remains unfixed, this network of support is essential for coaches as they face new challenges and acquire new skills. This helps to explain why the collaborative time with other coaches is so important to Kathryn.

Kathryn also reflects on her growth as a coach and her deeper understanding of the role itself:

I think I've gotten much better as a coach... yah I think I've gotten much better and too... um sometimes I mean certainly working with someone who is struggling you really have to start with where they are at and I think that is very important because in the back of your mind you're kind of thinking, okay, so when I fill my coaching log what I really want to say is I worked on this and this and I've got this strategy... I've got this teacher doing this strategy but sometimes you have to start with where they are at and the strategy comes a little later as you work through some of the difficulties that the person is having.

Here you can see that Kathryn has gained the confidence to step outside of the job description/perceived role of the coach. She has realized that coaching is not just about 'ticking the boxes' of particular instructional strategies – but about people. She understands that everyone comes from a different place and will need individualized approaches in order for them to grow as a teacher in their professional practice. Sometimes this process will not fit into a prescribed series of steps and that is okay.

Reflecting back on a particular coaching experience, Kathryn shares her initial struggles as a coach. She sees things much more clearly now:

Yeah, I think, uh, like I'm thinking of one situation in particular and, uh, you know I think it just made me really sad because, um, the lesson went well and the strategy went well and the students were successful but the teacher sat at the desk and marked and that doesn't happen so much, that doesn't really happen anymore

but I still think back to a few of those coaching experiences and um and just how I was happy at that time just to be able to get into the classroom. There wasn't nurturing that relationship with the teacher as much as I could've, would've, should've. And, um, so maybe that's one way that I have evolved in that I see that so much more now. Yeah.

The use of the phrase, "could've, would've, should've" suggests that Kathryn experiences some regret for missed opportunities with particular teachers but, as she makes apparent, hindsight is 20/20. The 19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Nietzsche put it succinctly, "A man has no ears for that to which experience has given him no access." It is only now that Kathryn can see where she went wrong.

Kathryn even makes fun of herself when she reflects on some of her earlier experiences with coaching and shares what not to do. This suggests that she is open to being vulnerable and that she does not take herself too seriously. Mistakes are part of the growth process:

Um...Yah! I think so... I think so... um I mean the biggest joke at my house is... when I repeated a conversation that I had with \_\_\_\_(46:30 not audible) a long time ago... we were working on something and I said, "how about this idea?" And she kind of just looked about me and said, "You mean another idea?" yah, so I'm really conscious... yah haha... I never say that anymore or one time I would think, "Oh why are you doing this?" it would be so much better this way! So um... I think certainly um, I never really thought of myself as being... I could never try to be pushy in that way... I like the person to kind of come to their own

awareness as we're working on things and kind of guide them... Um, it's better if the other person does more of the talking for sure... haha, it's really good if the coach says,...“That's great, here's another idea you might want to consider.”

It is quite plain to see that sometimes Kathryn's creativity and enthusiasm get the best of her. She realizes she may be inadvertently overwhelming teachers with another great idea and therefore, is more conscious of her approach.

Kathryn comments that her favorite place in the school is the photocopy room. Averse to being pushy, Kathryn loves to see how ideas get shared when teachers absentmindedly leave copies of their work on the table. In the photocopy room she gets to see concrete evidence of teacher's using what they learned from the coach. Here, she can judge the growth and rippling effect that is taking place at the school as well as her effectiveness as a coach:

I mean teachers are sharing more, that's one thing I've definitely noticed. So then that fishbone is out there then somebody else grabs it and next thing you know they're comparing...they're talking. Or, perhaps a student has it and says oh, I used a fishbone in so and so's class and it just starts to ripple.

A good indication that rippling is starting to occur is when the teacher you are coaching is now confident and skilled enough to see herself as a coach. Audrey sees herself as a coach due to her experience working with Kathryn, “Um, I think I sometimes... I think I can offer advice from experience. I think that I've had people uh ask different things and I try and be helpful similar to that of the instructional coach...”

During the interview, Kathryn also made the realization that Audrey has the qualities that would make a good coach:

I think she would make a good coach... a really good coach um I don't know if she's even really thought about it, in fact, I don't think I have really thought about it until this moment but she certainly has that kind of flexibility that creativity that risk taking um, I'm sure she'd kind of giggle and be flattered...

Kathryn goes on to highlight some of the unique qualities that Audrey possesses that make her someone special to work with while underscoring the genuine reciprocity of the relationship:

Because she has the bigger picture and uh she's willing to take risks that she doesn't have any barriers I just I'm amazed at the kind of some of the things she does and the things she dreams of haha. Yeah, very inspiring. I think that's what it is. Um when people inspire each other there's that same passion that you hope is going to be ignited so um she's great to work with. Yeah.

Both Kathryn and Audrey agree that Audrey has increased confidence and awareness in her teaching practice. Kathryn explains, "I think um, it's made her even more aware. I think her own awareness and her own confidence certainly... I would say that." Audrey also reflects on her growth:

Um how else have I grown? I guess I'm pretty organized I know where my assessment is coming from I know what I want them to learn more I guess I'm thinking more consciously of what do I want these kids to get out of this.

Being more self-aware or metacognitive is a definite sign of growth. Kathryn explains that Audrey doesn't really need her as she is always trying new things but the thing that makes their relationship special is that they have the opportunity for reflection that might not occur otherwise:

I don't think that she was ever dependent on me and um I think she, she is willing to try... she's always been wanting to try things regardless but having someone else to talk about it is, I think, really important because that um reflection piece...

Reflecting on her role as a coach the final year of her career, Kathryn has this to say, "So, uh, I can't stress enough how important coaching is, if you're going to make a change, a coach is the best way, yeah." With a long and successful career under her belt, Kathryn's insists that the best way to make change is with a coach. This suggests that her journey over the last four years as an instructional coach has left quite the impression on her. It also suggests that other forms of professional development she has participated in pale by comparison.

### ***Relationship 3: Lauren (coachee) and Victoria (coach)***

Lauren entered teaching looking for professional growth opportunities from the onset. However she encountered many setbacks and disappointments as she tried to work with her colleagues and the administration at her school as discussed previously. It seems that the coaching relationship she shared with Victoria was the rock she could count on when times got tough. This relationship allowed Lauren to continue her path towards excellence as a teacher. Here she considers what it would've been like for her if she didn't have a coach:

Yah, I probably wouldn't have been as confident...especially with the negative experiences that have happened like if they had happened and I didn't have the positive experience to offset it...then I probably wouldn't have been as confident in my teaching...and I probably wouldn't have asked anyone for help...I'd be my own little island ...which a lot of teachers are...I'd close my door and you do your own thing and it is what it is...you know, so I wouldn't be using as many resources as I'm using...um...yah and I think using those resources has definitely been beneficial for me and my kids.

The image of the 'little island' cut off from the rest of the school is exactly what coaching aims to break down. As Lauren shares, opening up her professional practice requires confidence and support from colleagues. It is sad to think that without the support of a coach, a young, high-achieving teacher might cut herself off from her colleagues by teaching in isolation early on in her career. Without support, many teachers who experience challenges early in their career may become complacent and lose the enthusiasm that drove them to enter the profession in the first place. These types of pivotal moments may set the course for the rest of their career and shouldn't be taken lightly.

Here is what Lauren gained from the coaching experience - confidence, validation, increased knowledge and implementation of instructional strategies, a greater ability to reflect on her professional practice, and a supportive colleague guiding her along the way:

Uh... it makes me much more confident that I am on the right track and I'm doing the right thing because she gives lots of positive feedback you know once we've achieved the final result that we wanted... um I think I've always been a reflective practitioner but I think I'm more reflective because of some of the questions or some of the you know ways we kind of look at it or give each other feedback afterwards um and I kind of have those 'go to' activities or ways of doing things like a lot of the Think Literacy strategies and things that I maybe wouldn't have necessarily tried as a many of them on my own... you know but that you know she would be like oh but there is that Think Literacy strategy you could do there... and so I use more of those, they are easy 'go to's' now... um that I maybe wouldn't have before and probably other people haven't looked at those books you know.

Listening to Lauren share her personal experience with coaching and how it has affected her teaching practice, one word really stands out in my mind –'reflective'. Most people would agree that reflection is key to professional growth and change, but it is something that many of us do not make the time for in our daily lives, whether it is at work or at home. Without exception, all coaches and coachees brought up the issue of time as being a problem for them in teaching. Lauren was no exception. Here she shares the importance of time needed to collaborate and reflect with colleagues in order to improve practice:

Well, I started it again, like I said as a new teacher I wanted help... and to some extent they, these other teachers that were really supporting me, finding me help... could answer my questions but in some cases we're like, we need time to develop these materials as well like creating a common um... handout or format

to teach the essay for the first time, you know sitting down together and saying okay, here are the ways we do it, how can we put all of the best ideas of these four frameworks into one you know things like that... you know?

Taking the time to be reflective strikes me as something that is of most value on the path to professional growth. However, it is something that we don't always make time for. The coaching experience provides the support, the space and the time for this to occur.

Due to her increased confidence and growth as a teacher, Lauren recently took on a department head role in French and has been coaching her colleagues informally as Victoria has done for her. This creates a rippling effect in the school, as Lauren is able to share what she's learned to others, "Um, I think that I have just informally then been coaching my department members. If I have a new department member, you know, using the same strategies or the same, you know, supports and resources to then help them um."

Victoria can also envision Lauren taking on a coaching role someday. However, she shares what she think might give her some trouble, "...the only downfall is that she's very confident and very poised and that may...and she is young so that may be threatening to other teachers so you know?"

Lauren, by contrast, describes Victoria this way, "She's super calm she's um has a quiet confidence so she's not going to get defensive like those other people that are not more supportive to me...um she is not critical or like when she has a concern it's voiced um, very supportively..." Lauren's description of Victoria as a coach with a 'quiet confidence' may explain why Victoria feels Lauren could face problems as a coach.

Victoria knows how difficult it is to get buy-in from staff and has learned to carefully navigate her way into teacher's classrooms –she feels her personality plays a role in this. Victoria seems to feel that teachers may be less open to Lauren who, besides being young, is very outwardly confident and self-assured which could make teachers feel insecure or uncomfortable working with her. This may be the case, but Lauren, to a certain degree, sees some of the problems Victoria faces as a coach due to her more quiet and easygoing personality. It seems as if there is probably a middle ground that would work best for both of them.

Although Lauren feels Victoria is an excellent coach and rates her coaching experience as a 10 out of 10, there is a sense from Lauren's comments that she might approach coaching a bit differently, especially when tackling buy-in from staff and administration, "...I think the coach can go to the principal and say, you know, I think we need to change the school culture and know if the coach is prepared for the negative onset then." Lauren realizes that not everyone is prepared to deal with the backlash that might ensue. She, herself, has been beat down.

As a coach, Victoria has experienced growth as both a teacher and a coach. She explains that she has learned more about how to incorporate and feel more comfortable using technology in the classroom due to her relationship with Lauren:

Um yes! She uses a lot more technology in her classroom so if it's not changing my practice... it's making me think of different ways to use technology she has kids access... she has a blog and so she's introduced that aspect to me... which I don't always feel comfortable with.

Victoria also emphasized how sharing some of the things she learned from Lauren have allowed her to bring these ideas to other staff members:

Well I have shared her, you know, some of the things she's come up with... like some of the conversations. Um... I've shared what she does with other teachers and she shares what she does so it kind of goes exponentially um... and the... the classroom blog in particular... um in particularly in language some of the things she does with verbal or oral communication... um I find effective and that's helped and I try and incorporate some of that in my lessons too... because I'm doing the literacy course this semester with a lot of ESL kids... so.

Although Victoria has experienced growth as highlighted above, there is a sense that she faces some roadblocks in her growth as a coach due to the difficult school culture and lack of support from administration and the board office as a whole. She feels some isolation as a coach as well as being spread too thin, "It changes it because I don't... feel so much as a coach anymore as I do an assistant to the principal to delivering PD and an assistant to Student Success to do this...you know?" She is also concerned over the perception of staff, "Yah, like I was saying, the perception is now that we're more close in line to the Board and that we're just...their vehicle for delivering board messages and board initiatives yah, I do see that perception, yup!"

For Victoria, the fact that she has a challenging staff to work with in terms of buy-in for professional development makes the change in role even more difficult as she tries to make progress. She explains that there aren't really any 'joiners' so she really has to prove the value of what she is trying to do. She rates her experience as a coach overall as

a 6 out of 10 because she still struggles to get into various departments such as Phys. Ed., Math and Science.

### *Summary of Growth*

Upon entering an instructional coaching relationship voluntarily, there is a general assumption that the aim of the experience is to incur some degree of professional growth. This may look different for different teachers but the goal is usually the same - to meet a particular immediate need in the classroom. Some teachers focus on issues they are having with their students while others are looking to beef up their instructional strategies repertoire or coming to the coach for much needed support and validation.

Growth is not a straightforward process. It takes time and patience to see the fruits of labour and loads of validation, support, and resilience along the way. It also does not happen in isolation – it is deeply embedded in the sociocultural context of the school and the school board. Coaches work to increase self-confidence in themselves and their coachees, differentiate the professional learning experience, and provide teachers with opportunities to take risks in their teaching practices. In the spirit of reciprocity, coachees may also have an impact on the professional growth of the coach. Furthermore, the ‘ripple effect’ is what speeds up the growth of the school as a whole.

Teaching is a tough profession with many ups and downs. In this study, teachers and coaches early in their career seem to need the most validation on their path of professional growth. In both cases one and three, the coachees needed validation in order to feel supported and to validate what they are doing in the classroom. Madeline emphasizes her journey in teaching as a “brutal uphill climb” and seeks validation from

the coach to help boost her confidence and to give her assurance that she is on the right track. Lauren, by contrast, needs validation to help her get through the variety of setbacks and disappointments she has faced with both administration and other staff members. Her issues are tied intimately to the sociocultural context of the school. In terms of the coaches in this study, Emily, being the youngest of the coaches describes her need for others to validate what she is doing as a coach as she tries to get into more classrooms. Gleaning insight from the data in this study, validation seems to be something that is needed in large doses during the early stages of the change or growth process. Kathryn, on the verge of retirement, by contrast, is a seasoned and confident teacher looking for opportunities to share best practices with others and seems to be comfortable in her role and does not look outwardly for validation. She does, however, reminisce about her early years in teaching and how she would have loved to have a coach to guide her and validate what she was doing.

All coaches and coachees in this study shared that being part of an instructional coaching relationship increased their trajectory of professional growth and their ability to be more metacognitive or reflective on their teaching practice. Kathryn and Victoria also explain the importance for instructional coaches to share best practices amongst themselves so as to create a network of support as they navigate this complex role.

Across all three cases, the ‘ripple effect’ was cited as a positive outcome of instructional coaching relationships in terms of working towards a collaborative school culture. Once a coaching relationship is cemented, the coachees began to feel more confident and validated in their abilities as teaching practitioners. This newfound

confidence gave coachees the courage to share what they have learned with others and, in turn, a rippling of sharing best practices ensued.

### ***Power and Resistance***

Power and resistance is an important theme that came up in all the interviews in this study. Although the coaches and coachees came to their roles voluntarily, all struggled to negotiate power in these relationships as well as within their relationship with administration. Subthemes included the resistance to authority/loss of autonomy, resistance to being vulnerable/open to change, resistance to administration or being tied to administration, the resistance of changes to the coaching role, the resistance to judgment and the need for equality.

#### ***Relationship 1: Madeline (coachee) and Emily (coach)***

Reflecting on all the interviews in this study, it was Madeline and Emily that were the most preoccupied with notions of power and resistance. Similar in age, both Emily and Madeline are struggling to feel comfortable and confident in their roles. They are very conscious of the power dynamics that surround them and struggle to negotiate power.

To gain some perspective on Madeline's take on power and resistance, it is important to mention that Madeline came to teaching after spending a decade working as a sign language interpreter in the U.S. She explains that this role made her feel like she was a 'middle man' in the educational field:

... you're interpreting everything that they say and you're the sort of middle man... the go between...between the deaf student and the teacher but there was never anytime where you sit down ... you don't lesson plan with them you don't talk about what they are going to talk about... you know... even if you thought 'you're making a mess of this'... you just interpret... you know what I mean? There's no collaboration or anything there... because you they look down on you as less than... and I don't mean less that as they look down on you but they don't see your function as a collaborative one... they just see you as doing a job... like a route job that has nothing to with them as teachers right? Like they don't see that there is a partnership there, that there is somebody that they can work with there... so...

As you can see here, Madeline felt undervalued as a sign language interpreter and was frustrated over the lack of collaboration with teachers. Her description of how she felt the teachers viewed her role is telling - "they look down on you as less than." Although Madeline quickly adds, "and I don't mean less that as they look down on you..." these statements are indicative of her need to feel equal and be heard. Furthermore, Madeline's description of the job as a 'route job' is another indication of how she felt teachers undermined her role in the classroom. To gain autonomy and respect, Madeline decided to go into teaching, "So I just decided to go into teachers college and I decided I'm going to do it myself... and I'm going to do it better and I mean I don't do it right all the time but I know I'm going to do it better and so that sort of became why I decided to go into teaching."

In her role as English teacher, Madeline actively seeks out collaborative professional development to help her grow. She was excited to work with a coach from the beginning and understood the importance of working together to reach goals; however, she seems to be more conscious of power dynamics in these types of relationships due to her previous work experience than others in this study. Madeline reflects on her initial apprehensions working with a coach, “Even the very first year that I had an instructional coach in my school I didn’t know what to expect... I was a little bit apprehensive, I thought oh; okay... you know get the sense... is she going to be judging my teaching? Right... you get that sense.”

Madeline doesn’t want to feel intimidated by the coach nor does she want to feel that she is being judged in any way. She wants to be an equal and take part in a partnership where both parties work together to make students successful. Madeline shares that her concerns ‘just kind of melted away’ after she had her first meeting with Emily who engaged her in a comfortable and casual conversation about her practice.

Although Madeline enjoys being engaged in professional development and wants to improve as a teacher, she is resistant to the number of initiatives that are being downloaded onto teachers:

Our school board in particular seems to have a... lot of different ideas attitudes coming at us at the same time and I think right now sort of because of sort of the expectation of where we live and of our community ...we.. there is a lot of downloading of all of these different ideas that comes down and I think once you get... once you start to get, um, too many things out there at once then you sort of

lose, um, you lose focus, so I absolutely agree with different programs, I think that they're important and every kid is different and every kid learns differently, but I also think that, um, nobody can be an expert in 50 different models, right?

Madeline's use of the term, 'download,' which she uses multiple times throughout the interview, suggests that she feels inundated with heavy burdens that are placed upon her and the rest of the staff. Ending with the question, 'right?' she wants validation that she is doing enough. She resists the notion that she should become 'expert' in all that is thrown her way.

Emily explains how she initially approaches teachers to make them feel comfortable during coaching:

The positive part of it is to really bring that positive spark first. You know you can't go in and say 'I say you should try this' because that's just undermining everything that they're doing in their classroom, thinking that you know you're right, you know, just like I guess the idea that you can really work with somebody else, you know, and the ideas do go back and forth and even though we were from different subject areas we can still learn from each other.

Here you can see that Emily has respect for her colleagues, is cognizant of the power dynamics that are at play, and is consciously working to make her colleagues feel comfortable. She realizes that people do not want to be undermined and she appreciates the particular strengths that teachers bring with them to the coaching relationship.

Upon reflection of what would turn her away from the coaching experience, Madeline had this to say:

Like, I think that if the coach was like really strict or really militant, not sort of what I would have... it wouldn't work as well because I wouldn't feel as comfortable, the coach probably wouldn't feel as comfortable and the kids probably wouldn't feel as comfortable, I think. Like I think the kids would sense, sort of that reserved and then they would internalize it... so absolutely.

Here Madeline's use of the word 'militant' stresses her disdain for authority and possible loss of autonomy that could occur if the coach was not flexible and open.

Besides the need to have control over her classroom and choice in what she explores professionally with a coach, it seems that Madeline is also worried that the students might lack loyalty to her, "I mean the kids are quite comfortable because, I mean, in my class just as many kids would ask her... well, I don't understand this part of it, as much as they would ask me."

You get the sense that Madeline expected the students to be more comfortable asking her questions and was surprised when the students were comfortable either way. This suggests that she has built strong relationships with her students and she assumes that they, in turn, would more often turn to her for help if presented with a choice. This feeds into her insecurities relating to her effectiveness as a teacher. It also suggests that sharing your students with another professional is not always easy even if you enjoy and welcome the coaching experience.

Although Madeline explains how comfortable she is within this coaching relationship, she is quick to emphasize that the coach is "not above her" but an equal. She

downplays the role of the coach on a number of occasions throughout the interview in order to maintain this sense of equality. Here is one example:

Well I... I...the coaching relationship is a partnership I find, I mean, the coach has these ideas because they've had the time to go to the workshops to get the information to bring back to their schools right? Whereas I don't have the time because I have a full schedule so I'm teaching the kids. So, I don't find that the coach is above me or anything... we work together. We're both professionals... we're both teachers, we both have an interest in making the students successful...

Madeline's focus on equality sheds some insight into her personal insecurities. She seems to downplay the coach's role in order to justify why the coach knows what she knows and she doesn't. Issues of time play a significant role for her here. She has high hopes and aspirations as a teacher and is trying to live up to them.

For Emily, it seems that her biggest struggle is trying to dispel the myth among teachers that she is closely tied to administration. She resists this perception among staff:

some people see me as sometimes an extension I think of administration um... you know, because they see that I have a good relationship with the principal and that maybe makes them feel uncomfortable thinking maybe I'm his spy and things like that um... you know and that's not the case like I think we all are working together but sometimes there is that perception because I do work often with the principal and that we do get along that um... I'm sort of on his side you know... and you know I'm not on their side when really there isn't a side... we're all here

to work and you know do some good things for the school and for the kids...  
right?...

Emily's use of the word 'right' suggests that she is looking for validation for her relationship with the principal and the amount of time she works with him. For many coaches, there is a constant struggle between spending time in the classroom and doing other duties assigned by the principal. Due to the flexibility of the role, administration has a tendency to pull coaches to do other professional development tasks that are not directly related to working in the classrooms with teachers. On many occasions, the principal is still unclear of the role of the coach and the coach struggles to navigate a role that is not clearly defined.

Here she goes on to explain the frustration of being unable to work with teachers because she was yet again pulled out of the school for professional development or to plan P.D.:

yah sometimes if we're taking time to plan a big P.D. day, we might have a week that we don't get in an actual class and it's frustrating sometime because your you want to really bring it into the classroom so that the students benefit. And yes, you're doing all the planning and the outside work and yes, it's part of our job and yes, that's important but when I think we can really get in a classroom and help the teacher help the kids, I think that's where we get the most bang for our buck in terms of coaching. Um, I see value in the other stuff, um, but I think the more we can be in a classroom, the better it is for everybody. But I also realize we have to learn the stuff to bring it to the classroom.

Emily's uses the word, 'yes,' over and over again as she tries to justify why she is pulled away so often and is spending less time in classrooms. There is a sense of guilt associated with it and a need for reassurance that she is doing the right thing. Deep down she knows that working in a classroom directly with teachers is of most importance –the 'most bang for our buck' but struggles to resist the administration's use of her role, calling it 'part of our job.'

Emily gets defensive while sharing her feelings on being considered tied to administration:

Well, you know, it's just... I guess it's frustrating sometimes because my personality is just really to be friendly and work with everybody and that's just how I am, like I don't have any agenda, like I don't have any you know... some people... maybe some people do and that's why they think that? You know, some people have aspirations of being principals and superintendents and things themselves and you know... I just want to be in the building and help kids in whatever way I can do that I will and if that means that you know I have a relationship with the principals and with teachers then, that's fine... we don't all have to be best friends or anything but um, we should be able to work together and I guess that's the part that sometimes is frustrating is that you know... I'm just here to work with you and we don't have to be buddies you know...

As Emily tries to understand where the problem lies, she provides insight into some of her own issues. She is defensive and seems to be projecting unwanted feelings onto other people.

Although Emily resists being tied to administration, she feels having a supportive principal is important to help her increase clientele and get into classrooms, "...so I think the teachers see that the principal finds it important which makes my job easier because they know that's going to be important which makes my job easier because they know that's going to be important to him, important to the building, I guess, and to the kids, ultimately."

Emily realizes that any promotion coming from the principal directly has a bigger impact than if the coach was doing it on her own.

***Relationship 2: Kathryn (coachee) and Audrey (coach)***

Audrey and Kathryn are both strong seasoned practitioners in their school. As discussed earlier, they share a strong confidence and a creative streak that allow them to be open and flexible to the coaching experience. However, there are still certain boundaries that teachers like Audrey feel are essential to having a positive coaching experience, "Um not someone who directs you like, you know, it's still the teacher's classroom and you're just bouncing ideas off of them basically and you want them to guide but not, um, I could see how teachers would maybe not want them to tell them this is how you have to teach." As you can see here, there is some issue with the perception of authority and autonomy. Audrey still wants to ensure she has control over her classroom and expects the coach to not overstep boundaries and tell her what to do. She sees the coach's role as a guide. She further explains that teachers are territorial and coaching cannot be forced on them:

People need to be accepting and they have to want to, you know, nothing can be forced. Like I said teachers are territorial, haha. So they can't be forced into saying you have to have this extra person in your room, right? So they have to be accepting and wanting and uh the needs of the kids are always first for teachers and that's a good thing.

When Audrey laughs at the notion that teachers are territorial, it seems to say that she also shares this sentiment with other teachers. She further suggests that some teachers may be averse to coaching because they are afraid to lose their structured approach to teaching that keeps students under control in the classroom:

And uh some people feel their classroom needs to be a little more structured so that might hinder them having fun as well they might think that you know you know controlled chaos isn't a good thing or something you know we might think oh my gosh I won't be able to get these students doing what I need them to do after your doing this activity which is something you could talk about with the coach anyway.

All the coachees in this study shared the same viewpoint that insecurity hinders coaching relationships from forming or flourishing. Audrey explains:

Um, again if people are maybe a little insecure and don't want someone into their room right they might not approach Kathryn at all, right? There may be people in here that have never worked with her and I don't know if there are or not but I would imagine there's people that haven't worked with anybody and come to work and do what they're supposed to do and go and that's what they do. Um,

unfortunately but but there again people might be shy, their comfort level um they might not know realise all the things you could do like I said you know it doesn't always have to be just the instructional coach coming into your classroom it could be that she helps facilitate another teacher with information that would be useful in your curriculum to come into your room so maybe people don't all of the benefits yet. Um I think for the most part people do at this school though but um there again it's it's comfort I would say the biggest thing is comfort.

Here Audrey makes mention of the fact that she feels that, for the most part, the people at her school are aware of what the coach does and understand the benefits of coaching.

This awareness is an important step in the coaching process that not all schools have attained at this point. Due to this, Audrey believes the biggest thing is the comfort level of the teachers that makes or breaks coaching relationships from forming. Teacher resistance to being open and vulnerable is a common problem mentioned by all coaches in this study as they work to invoke teachers to improve and reflect on their practice.

Kathryn shares her approach as a coach as she attempts to deal with the roadblocks Audrey highlighted above:

because you have to be really nonjudgmental and you have to go in with a totally open mind um... and nobody teaches anything the same way so you always have to be really careful and you always want the person to think that it is their idea you know, you want to work with them and help them but ultimately you leave... and they have to keep going... um, and so um... I think that is one thing about coaching is realizing that you're not going in there and taking over, what you're

doing is helping the person to move forward and you're just in the background applauding so, I think that maybe can be a problem with some personalities because you're not willing to do that and then there are people who are never going to work with you so, um.

Kathryn is very aware of how careful she must be when she approaches teachers; she is cognizant of the way people pull back from being judged or told what to do. She likens herself to a cheerleader who is applauding in the background. She seems to be at peace with the fact that not everyone will be willing to take that risk. The coaching process is voluntary and she does what she can.

She reflects back on a time when she was just excited to get in a classroom. She gives an example of a particular teacher who sat at the back of the classroom marking while Kathryn delivered the lesson. Now, she cringes at the thought and resists such abuse of services by teachers. Kathryn reflects, "I was happy at that time just to be able to get into the classroom there wasn't nurturing that relationship with the teacher as much as a I could've, would've, should've. And um so maybe that's one way that I have evolved in that I see that so much more now. Yeah."

As Kathryn became more comfortable in the coaching role, she realizes that for coaching relationships to flourish, she has to slowly give up control to allow coachees to be empowered and use a gradual release of responsibility in her approach. The coach and coachee need to work side by side. Kathryn explains that the coach shouldn't be the one doing all the work, "You really have to empower people to realize that these are things

that they can do and too, to look for opportunities to empower people that might not otherwise have those kinds of opportunities.”

Kathryn reveals that the coaching role has evolved over time. She questions whether it is better to be working in the teacher’s classroom directly or working with larger groups in a form of a group P.D. session:

...but you’re also pulled in other directions where you’re not working so much with the teachers in their classrooms as you’d like to maybe? And I think maybe that’s good too because you’re working with bigger groups because there was always that question of one on some or you know, one on one...what’s better? I don’t know, I mean it’s still a question.

***Relationship 3: Lauren (coachee) and Victoria (coach)***

Although Lauren and Victoria have a great professional and personal relationship, it is other sociocultural factors in their school that make them feel frustrated and spark moments of resistance.

Victoria feels that the role of the coach has evolved but not for the better. She is now bombarded with new tasks that she views as administrative. She sounds exasperated when she says she has to be part of ‘every initiative that comes across the principal’s desk, “Okay, it’s evolved... I’m doing a lot more tasks that are perceived as administrative... I’m involved in P.D., I’m involved in almost every committee like every initiative that comes across the principal’s desk... so it’s evolved that way... I’m spending less time in the classroom.”

Spending less time in the classroom means that there is less one-on-one work happening with teachers and less individualized support for all the initiatives that are occurring. Victoria explains what it feels like to have all these added responsibilities:

um...mostly, I feel that stress that I have more responsibilities and then I'm spread so thin that I'm I don't I question how effective I am at each one including my own teaching because I do have my own class to teach so I feel a little bit um stretched yah."

Feeling stretched and stressed, Victoria questions her own effectiveness, not only as a coach but also as a teacher. The added responsibilities are starting to take their toll and she seems to sinking be under the weight of them. Typically, it is younger teachers who feel this type of stress not experienced teachers, like Victoria. It appears that Victoria has a hard time saying 'no' and that the administration, in the era of increased accountability and initiatives, is putting more and more on the plates of teachers and coaches. She also shares that she doesn't even feel like a true coach anymore, "It changes it because I don't... feel so much as a coach anymore as I do an assistant to the principal to delivering PD and an assistant to Student Success to do this... you know?"

Victoria seems to be experiencing a sense of loss as she talks about her role/identity as coach slipping away from her. Calling herself an assistant shows us she feels her role has diminished –she is losing autonomy and isn't being respected as a professional. She goes on to say that she feels that her role is defined day by day at the administration's whim, "Um... mainly as... they also feel very responsible for how their

school does on an SEF visit from what I've been talking to people... so the effectiveness of coaching... um... I think now is a little bit more at administration's whim."

Explaining that the effectiveness of coaching is at the whim of administration suggests that Victoria doesn't feel she has control over whether or not she is a good coach. If the role is constantly being taken in different directions at the whim of administration, it is difficult for Victoria to grow in her role and to steady her professional compass.

Considered knowledge workers, teachers and coaches, value autonomy over tasks. Coaches and teachers are more interested in fulfilling their purpose and gaining mastery of their role than following arbitrary instructions from administrators who are far removed from the classroom and focused on quantifiable deliverables, not true effectiveness.

When asked her views on the future of the coaching role, Victoria has this to say, "I've got to say that there has been so much turnover with instructional coaches so I don't think it's positive for instructional coaches and I can't speak for anything else but I see a lot of frustration within coaching, giving up their roles..." For Victoria, the increased frustration within coaching and the number of coaches giving up their roles can be considered a canary in the coalmine for the problems that are brewing beneath the surface.

Victoria shares that she is willing to share her role or give it up if there is another staff member interested but no one, at this point, is interested in taking on the role:

I've also offered, like I've asked the principal, I don't own this spot so if anyone else shows interest let me know I'm willing to share or give it over to someone...

but there is no one really wanting to take the role and I think that because there is the perception that we're really closely lined with administration and that's the other things that comes out of this is how the job evolved as well... when I'm involved in all the board initiatives the perception is that I'm more closely aligned with admin. There's that perception.

Victoria resists being seen as tied to administration. She knows that is something the staff use as a barometer of her loyalty to them and creates more difficulty for her as she tries to get into more classrooms. She wants teachers to realize that she is just as skeptical as they are over some of the initiatives and only promotes things she feels are of value to the students and the professional practice of teachers:

...I've been teaching a long time and um... I do have credibility and I do have I think they respect my ideas and opinions but, you know, they may think I that I have 100% buy in and like "of course she thinks it's going to work" but I do... I share a fair amount of skepticism if I think something's impractical and so I think I try ... I try and be somewhat objective so that you know teachers I think see I don't have 100% buy-in, like things have to have value and have to be effective and I think that helps to, and not just sort of a mouth-piece for every latest strategy..."

By referring to how she doesn't want to be seen as a 'mouth-piece for every latest strategy,' Victoria is asserting her autonomy and her professional judgment. She resists being a 'talking head' spewing off whatever she is told is valuable to staff. She needs to

be convinced of the value herself. She has been around for a long time and realizes that not all initiatives are worthwhile.

Not only does Victoria feel that she is losing autonomy over her role, she also believes that the sense of support amongst her coaching colleagues is starting to wane. She attributes this to the 'prescribed form' of coaching meetings that are now taking place as well as the increased number of initiatives that they are involved in. Consultants and superintendents, with little input from coaches, set the agenda for coaching meetings. She is nostalgic for the days when the coaches were able "to set their own agenda," "share best practices" and reflect on their effectiveness as coaches. She explains that the coaching meetings now, "get squeezed in once a month and it's a couple of hours and it's usually, it's not talking about coaching, it's talking about initiatives" leaving out time to talk about the "everyday issues and struggles" of the coach. Here she describes how she feels about the coaching role being reduced and undervalued:

It's frustrating... I feel... we used to have our own (cough) division and we felt you know pretty isolated and we had our own... right? And now we're part of Student Success and we get drawn along to whatever initiatives are happening in Student Success and I feel like we're just kind of along for the ride.

When Victoria uses the expression, "along for the ride," it suggests that she feels that her role as a coach is not valued or made a priority at the school board level. Although she used to feel isolated from the rest of the school board as a coach, at least there was support from within her circle of coaching colleagues. Now, she expresses her frustration of being pulled along with no specific coaching goal in mind. It seems that Victoria feels

instructional coaches are being used as an extension of Student Success (initiatives set out by the board to coincide with the Student Success/Learning to 18 (Ministry of Education and Training, 2004)), not as an entity of worth onto itself.

For the school board in this study, funding for instructional coaching is something decided on an annual basis and has created insecurity in the existence of the role for the future. There hasn't been a strong commitment from administration to ensure it remains a priority and administration uses coaches for a variety of things that coaches check off as 'other' in their coaching logs – this means items not laid out in the job description. This definitely creates some resistance and lack of security for coaches as they attempt to navigate their role. Victoria explains why she feels many coaches tick 'other':

... I mean we log our time and we use bar graphs to show how much we're being used for this and that and other and it's supposed to show where we are spending our time... and a lot of it is 'other' and I don't know whether admin. doesn't have a good grasp on the role... but they're just, I think they have all these things to deliver that we're the wisest choice to help them because we know... and I think they have a good grasp of what we're supposed to do... but that doesn't mean they aren't going to use us to help them... because I mean... I think they're thrown a lot of things to do and we have a lot of knowledge and we have a lot of use for them... so, and I think that they see us as a connection to the staff... so."

From Victoria's point of view, principals view coaches as a resource to help lighten their load on the copious amounts of P.D. that needs to be delivered. However, when administration takes advantage of the knowledge and flexibility of the coach in this way,

coaches, like Victoria, seem to be losing their sense of identity as coaches and their motivation to stay in this role.

For Lauren, the majority of her resistance and power struggles lies outside the coaching relationship. The coaching relationship, by contrast, seems to be the one thing that keeps her motivated to keep trying new things. When faced with negativity early on, she sought out ways to work around it. Here Lauren shares how she handled the initial resistance of her department head, “The English department head was not so positive about professional learning and did not foster a warm and welcoming atmosphere. So, I actually well, we created a group of female teachers in the English department...an English professional learning community...sort of underground...” By creating the underground, ‘grass roots’ professional learning community, Lauren attempts to subvert the power of her department head so she can create the support system she needs and share resources amongst her colleagues. This ‘wonderful’ experience as Lauren reminisces fondly, was cut short when the department head caught wind of what they were doing:

The department head was super ticked that we were being recognized for having got this idea...and just really made our lives difficult and um so at that point I started to pull back a bit from other committees I was on...like the school capacity building team... and different things like that, that I had been on because I felt like it was a big target on my back...like doing those things that this guy was going to use that sort of against me.

Due to her negative experiences with a previous V.P, the English department head mentioned here, and another French department head, Lauren is starting to feel disillusioned. She is a passionate and young teacher, but the roadblocks she faces on her path to be innovative and collaborative are starting to get the best of her. She begins to pull away. When Lauren shares that she feels like she has a “big target” on her back, it is obvious that Lauren is not just sharing a difference of opinion, but is actually experiencing workplace bullying. This time, Lauren doesn’t subvert power, but succumbs to the pressure and leaves the English department, “But I moved into French...so I knew I wanted to have a child and did not want to be stressed everyday...”

Due to these types of experiences, Lauren has decided to resist participating in new ventures. She explains that she doesn’t want to face more disappointment, “Now, I am coming back from maternity leave and I’m not participating although the principal asked me, like just the other day if I wanted to join something...I want to be in something that’s actually going somewhere.”

She explains further difficulties she faces in her school:

I’ve definitely got the message or the idea that there are certain groups of people that are open to learning and developing materials and then there are other people who are very vocal that they are not and you definitely have to be careful who you show your colours to, you know? Because they can get very defen...I find their criticism comes from being defensive...I’ve noticed...you know?

Here, Lauren shares that she has to be careful with whom she ‘shows her colours.’ She doesn’t feel she can just be herself with everyone; she has to hide her true feelings and

enthusiasm for teaching. Lauren tries to understand the naysayers by interpreting their criticism as a mode of defense.

The above examples provide evidence that Lauren is also experiencing cognitive dissonance. The mental stress and discomfort she feels is a direct result of this. Although Lauren yearns to improve her professional practice and collaborate with colleagues, Lauren chooses the contradictory action, to step aside and forgo participation.

Discussing the possibility that Lauren could one day make an excellent coach, Victoria realizes that Lauren may face further opposition in such a role. She provides insight into why Lauren may be having difficulty with particular members on staff and shares her views on Lauren as a future coach, “Yes I think so! She may also have, have the only thing... the only downfall is that she’s very confident and very poised and that may... and she is young so that may be threatening to other teachers so, you know?” To sum it up, nobody wants someone to come in and make everyone else look bad. She poses a threat to the status quo. This has its negative repercussions.

When discussing coaching, Lauren realizes that this type of professional development can’t be forced. Based on her experiences, defensive people like those she mentions above are not going to allow themselves to be open to the coaching process:

I would say, like obviously willingness from the coachee right? It can’t be forced... although some people need it to be forced but I don’t think that works... um and then... just to sense that you know people are on the same level like one person is not above the other I think and that, that person is actually knowledgeable in their position...

Lauren uses the word ‘actually’ to emphasize what is important for her. Here she values a coach who is ‘actually knowledgeable’ and she wants to be a part of something that is ‘actually going somewhere’ as mentioned earlier. Both of these references highlight the value she sees in her coaching experience with Victoria, which she feels is authentic, supportive, and beneficial. By contrast, she doesn’t consider the Student Success teacher in her school a valuable resource to her, “I don’t always use our Student Success person because I don’t feel that they are necessarily super knowledgeable, so feel like, well it’s not really a resource to me so I think that’s important, it needs to be a valuable resource.”

Having personally faced difficulties with staff/admin, Lauren shares some of the struggles she sees Victoria face as a coach:

...she (referring to coach) would go to the principal or she would talk about wanting to go to the principal and say can I go to the first department head meeting of the year and discuss what I do and it’s a positive thing and it’s not an evaluation and sort of dispel the myths um... and she wouldn’t always get that invitation and so then that’s hard because you know that’s the easiest way to reach the body of staff you know... um you.

Lauren attempts to understand why the principal has not made an effort to encourage the staff to work with Victoria. She feels that this is an important way for staff to buy-in to the coaching process:

... well we haven’t had a staff meeting since I’ve been here... I mean we had like the just one pass out your schedules for the semester but no other staff meetings where the principal could say... you know... here is what Victoria has been up to

or does anyone want to share a positive experience of how coaching has helped you ... um and I think that stems from... the whoever the principal is never having used a coach when they were teaching so they don't see the value in it so they know it's there but they just think you know it's just another board initiative that we just have to watch them come and go but if a principal was here that had used a coach or had been a coach... then I think they would have a different perspective and they would encourage it more...

Lauren makes clear that people in positions of power, like the principal, need to support and promote the work of the coach. They need to see the value in it. However, she points out that many principals have never worked with a coach or have been a coach, so they lack enthusiasm and understanding of what the coach can provide to staff.

### ***Summary of Power and Resistance***

Power dynamics can get in the way of good coaching. As illustrated throughout the data, the power struggles vary across the relationships but most of major power struggles shared lie outside of the immediate coaching relationship - struggles with administration, department heads and other staff members. Common struggles within were centered on insecurity, equality, and autonomy as the coach and coachee negotiated power in their relationships. For each relationship presented here, there was a need to define boundaries, to establish a comfort level, and to enter the relationship with a growth mindset before meaningful professional dialogue could occur. Power is constantly negotiated throughout the coaching relationship and both coach and coachee are cognizant of the inter-relational power dynamics at play.

### *Summary of Data Analysis*

Exploring the lived experience of the instructional coaching relationship, from the perspective of both the coach and the coachee, using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, allowed for the detailed, nuanced, microanalysis of individual experience. Pulling away from the microanalysis into the overarching themes, this study found three super-ordinate themes: 1) Trust, 2) Growth, and 3) Power and Resistance which highlight what is common among individuals in this study who experience instructional coaching and the instructional coaching relationship. A discussion of the major findings in relation to the existing literature follows.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### *Introduction*

The current study highlights the value of examining the lived experience of instructional coaching, and more specifically, the instructional coaching relationship, in the secondary school setting. The research question for this study is: “What is the lived positive experience of instructional coaching, including the coaching relationship, among secondary teachers (coachees) and the instructional coaches (IC) in a southwestern Ontario school board?” This study aims to provide insight for policy makers, superintendents, principals, and consultants as they make decisions on how to fund, support, and successfully implement instructional coaching models at the secondary level. Furthermore, the goal is to provide a context for instructional coaches as they attempt to navigate a complex and nuanced role.

The use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in this study has enabled a rich and nuanced account of the lived experiences of three instructional coaches and three corresponding coachees in a coaching relationship. To understand the complex nature of these relationships, it was important to examine the relationship from the perspective of both the coach and coachee and appreciate the context in which the relationship exists.

Much of the literature shares key attributes of successful coaches/ teacher leaders (York-Barr & Duke, 2004) and the importance of building strong relationships (Blamey et al., 2008; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Marsh et al., 2008; Mraz et al., 2008, Stahan et al.,

2010), but few studies attempt to truly understand the lived experience of instructional coaching from the perspective of the coach and coachee in a particular relationship or what makes these relationships work. Furthermore, Rainville (2007) suggests that there is a need to further explore the experiences of teachers with instructional coaches. As a result, this study has been able to extend the findings of previous research that focused predominantly on the experiences of the coach (Blamey, Meyer, & Walpole, 2010; Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Rainville & Jones, 2008) or on the changes in professional practice of the coachee (Batt, 2009; Zwart, Wubbels, Bergen, & Bolhuis, 2007).

Notions of trust, growth, power and resistance were the three superordinate themes to emerge from the data and these themes were embedded deeply in the sociocultural context of the school. In the following section, the main components of the results are discussed and interpreted.

### *Trust*

Trust lies at the foundation of all successful relationships and nearly all major theories of interpersonal relationships (Simpson, 2007). Case studies on teacher leadership have found that teacher leaders who are most effective are successful classroom teachers who garner the respect and trust of their colleagues and are able to develop strong critical friend relationships with teachers (York-Barr, & Duke, 2004). Therefore, it comes at no surprise that the notion of trust permeates the personal accounts of both the coaches and coachees in this study as they describe their experience of the instructional coaching relationship.

The foundation of trust in the relationship between the coaches and coachees appears to be hinged on the shared values/teaching philosophies across the three cases in this study. These shared values/philosophies create comfort in the relationship and enable the coaches and coachees to identify on a personal level with the other. Kathryn shares her feelings about it in this way, “I think what is fun about that is, um, when she approaches me, we are already on the same page about it...” Sharing similar values allows the relationships to form naturally as both partners start with a similar mindset/value system. In short, familiarity breeds comfort.

Although all coaches and coachees interviewed shared a comfort level in their professional relationship, each coach and coachee came to the relationship at different points and invariably, different levels of trust. Comparing relationships across the three cases, it was evident that some participants came to trust more easily than others. In fact, the coach and coachee who explicitly discussed the notion of trust the most, Madeline and Emily, seemed to be the pair that were least confident and secure in their own abilities and consequently, had a more difficult time opening up and trusting the other. A comfort level had to be established to decrease anxiety and allow for risk-taking to occur. Listen to Madeline talk about her initial feelings:

I thought oh God...don't ask me to take the lead...I'm going to look like an idiot in front of you and all these kids. But like I said, just because the conversation we wer're having ...um...and just because she was you know...you know, we're going to try it...it might work, and it might not. Kind of the attitude of the coach kind of put me at ease more.

According to Simpson (2007), “trust involves the juxtaposition of people’s loftiest hopes and aspirations with their deepest worries and fears” (p. 264). Inevitably, if trust is not established to help put aside people’s fears, there may be some resistance to taking risks on the path to attaining personal goals. Simpson (2007), describing the psychological foundations of trust, delineates individual differences in attachment orientations, self-esteem, or self-differentiation affect the growth or decline of trust over time in relationships. He explains that individuals with higher self-esteem, for example, are more likely to experience trust or develop an increased sense of trust over time (Simpson, 2007). Therefore, before trust can be established between coach and coachee, there needs to be an ability of both parties to trust in themselves. Zagzebski (1996) explains that the process of education or belief formation involves, first and foremost, trusting oneself – in one’s senses, one’s memory, and in one’s intellectual skills, among other virtues along with an ability to trust in others. A readiness and openness to change is apparent. In coaching relationships, an establishment of trust enables a level of psychological depth and challenge that might not surface otherwise (Machin, 2010).

Although presumably obvious, it is important to state that individual differences of both the coach and the coachee affect the quality of coaching relationships. Many studies on instructional coaching focus exclusively on the qualities of the coach and how they garner strong relationships with coachees, but not many focus on the dyadic nature of the relationship. Simpson (2007) developed the Dyadic Model of Trust of Relationships (see Figure 3), which presumes that “information about the relative dispositions of both partners is essential to understanding and explaining the growth of trust – or lack thereof - in a relationship across many interactions” (p.266). The two

partners are considered interdependent. The model contains both normative (typical) and individual-difference components. The normative components are portrayed in the five boxes (constructs) in the middle of the figure and the individual-difference components highlight the relevant dispositions of each partner in the relationship (e.g. attachment orientations, self-esteem, self-differentiation) and the connections to each of the normative constructs. This is a useful model to take into account when looking at why some instructional coaching relationships flourish or falter or why certain individuals are receptive to coaching or not.

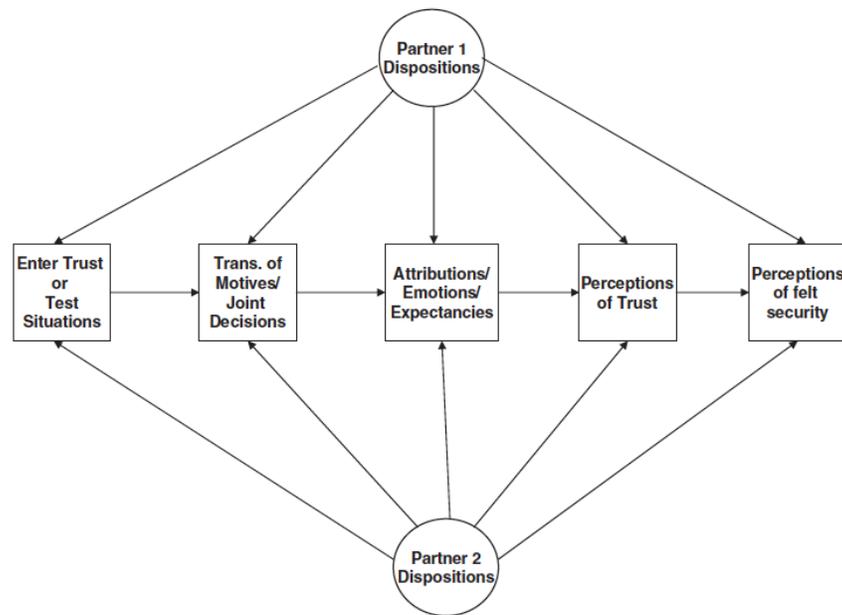


Figure 3: The Dyadic Model of Trust in Relationships (Simpson, 2007).

In contrast to Madeline and Emily who explicitly and repeatedly discuss trust in their interviews, Kathryn and Audrey make little mention of trust but seem to have a stronger sense of trust and security in their relationship. Perhaps, as Burbules (1993) argues, once trust is established it “can become an unquestioned background condition,

something that might need occasional reinforcement, but that most of the time literally goes without saying” (p. 37). These differences in discourse may hint at differences in individual dispositions such as self-esteem. Madeline and Emily express a need for validation and were more concerned about being considered equal. These differences may be related to levels of internal confidence. Whereas, both Kathryn and Audrey exude a natural confidence, which may allow them to enter trust situations more easily and was not a point of attention. Audrey’s description of Kathryn’s personality sheds some insight into why trust happened so naturally. “...she’s got a kindness about her too, you know, the kids to the teachers, anyway, there’s a big comfort.” Kindness brings us close to others; it nourishes the relationship and helps to establish trust. Ferrucci (2006) describes the link between kindness and trust in this way. “Kindness is trusting and ready to risk...To trust is to be kind to others” (p. 89). Coaches like Kathryn have a special ability to uplift others by helping them discover a trait or an ability, which perhaps, the coachees were unaware of. Kathryn has a lot of faith in others and knows how to bring out the best in those she works with. She makes it more comfortable for teachers to engage in an open exchange of ideas and share their teaching practice with her. Kathryn’s kindness is selfless and inspirational, leaving a mark on those who get to know her. We all should aspire to coach in this way.

Another important factor in the development of trust between two individuals is the degree to which an individual promotes the partner’s best interests rather than his or her own (Simpson, 2007). In this study, the notion of having genuine intentions or being authentic was an important factor in developing trust. It was something that was mentioned in all three cases. Trust is fostered when there is a strong commitment to the

relationship and the intentions and motivations of both partners are clear and predictable –reducing uncertainty, which may breed distrust. In contrast to the trust developed among the coaches and coachees in this study, a lack of benevolent intentions leading to distrust is clearly illustrated in the story shared by Lauren about the vice principal at her school. The vice principal’s disingenuous aims caused her to lose faith in the motivations of others and pull back. In a school setting, teachers commonly question whether someone’s intentions are for the greater good of the students and staff or are they self-serving goals to help particular individuals ‘climb the ladder’ as in the case of Lauren’s V.P. Authenticity is an important factor in gaining the trust of others. Without it, relationships may break down.

Along with disingenuous intentions, power dynamics can prevent trust from occurring. Instructional coaches add a new dimension to the hierarchical nature of a school’s structure and teachers may question their ties to administration or whether they take on an evaluative role (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007; Mraz et al., 2008). Many coaches attribute their lack of success to stubborn, resistant teachers without questioning perceptions of power as it relates to the coaching role (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010). The above example illustrates that trust building is a sensitive process and both parties involved may make many assumptions.

### ***Growth***

Since the pinnacle work of Joyce and Showers on peer coaching (Showers et al., 1987), we are aware of the benefits of coaching over traditional forms of professional development where only 5% of teachers apply what they learned in professional learning

activities to their classroom practices in comparison to a 90% implementation rate when teachers are coached along with professional learning. This type of professional growth is why coaching is touted as a key component of any professional development program in many school boards. Although implementation rate of instructional practices is a key sign of professional growth, this study sheds light on how both coaches and coachees experienced growth in a more personal way and how this growth fueled reciprocity and a ‘ripple effect’ amongst staff.

As the coaches and coachees shared their personal accounts of experiencing growth in the coaching relationship, validation or affirmation was seen as a key component in helping propel them forward on their personal and professional trajectory of growth. A couple of the coaches mentioned that they felt part of their role was that of a cheerleader, or “ra-ra person” as Emily put it - someone to inspire confidence, increase self-esteem, make learning fun, and provide much needed validation to teachers when the day-to-day grind of teaching gets the best of them. Similar results were found in a study of Florida middle school reading coaches. Marsh et al. (2008) shared how teachers in their case study schools felt empowered by the coach providing them with the confidence they needed to try new teaching practices. With validation and a network of support, there is a greater chance for coaches and coachees to grow into their ideal professional self. Everyone in this study is at different stages in the growth process but all expressed that they experienced accelerated growth and became more reflective while engaged in the coaching relationship. Madeline reminds us that the process isn’t easy and describes her journey as a teacher as a “brutal uphill climb;” all the more reason to ensure that teachers have the support they need on their journey of professional growth.

Much of the coaching literature focuses on what the teachers gain from the coaching relationship (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Edwards, 1995; 1998; Sturtevant & Linek, 2007), however; this study shows that it is not only the teachers who benefit from the coaching relationship. All coaches in this study felt that they had grown professionally and personally through their coaching relationships. Kathryn highlights the genuine reciprocity of the relationship. "...when people inspire each other there's that same passion that you hope is going to be ignited so um she's great to work with" while Emily describes how Madeline helps to validate what she does as a coach:

...I guess knowing that there's people like Madeline in the building that even if you're having a day where you know you're trying to get into a classroom trying to get into a department, and it's not working, knowing that there are people like Madeline that really believe in your job and believe that the things that you're doing helps kids.

The importance of affirmation in relationships is central to a psychological model called the 'Michelangelo phenomenon.' (Rusbult, Finkel, & Kumashiro, 2009). This is a useful interpersonal model to help us understand the importance of partnerships/strong relationships between coach and coachee. The Michelangelo model proposes that, "close partners sculpt one another's selves, shaping one another's skills and traits and promoting versus inhibiting one another's goal pursuits" (Rusbult, Finkel, & Kumashiro, 2009, p. 305). Named after the Renaissance sculptor, Michelangelo Buonarroti, this model takes inspiration from the way Michelangelo approached his work. Michelangelo felt that an ideal form was locked inside the stone and it was the sculptor's job to chip away at the stone in order to reveal the ideal form slumbering within. By carefully chipping the stone

or shedding its imperfections, the ideal form can emerge. This model speaks to a variety of factors needed to ensure that coaching relationships work.

If we imagine the sculptor as the coach, we can see that it is important for the coach to approach coaching relationships with this mental model in mind. All coaches and coachees have ideal professional and personal forms. Some may be buried deeper than others but close partners that can see the good in each other are able to slowly coax the ideal self to the surface. Once strong relationships or true partnerships are developed, role reversal may occur - the coachee may be doing some of the sculpting of the coach.

Coaching, like sculpting, is a labour of love. Listening to the participants reflect on their other half in the coaching relationship, it was easy to see that caring, genuine relationships had formed. Reflecting on her role as coach, Kathryn came to the realization that coaching is not just about ‘ticking the boxes’ of particular instructional strategies – but about people. According to Gordon, Benner, and Noddings (1996), caring is “not a psychological state or an innate attribute but a set of relational practices that foster mutual recognition and realization, growth, development, protection, empowerment, and human community, culture, and possibility” (p.xiii). It is enduring, reciprocal, and responsive (Noddings, 1984). Interestingly, research shows that many teachers underestimate care’s moral relevance, despite the fact that many of those teachers claim that caring is their reason for becoming teachers (Goldstein & Lake, 2000). Kathryn, reflecting on her early experiences as a coach, shares regrets over some early blunders. In one particular instance where the teacher sat at his desk and marked while she modeled a lesson, Kathryn recounts that she “wasn’t nurturing” the relationship with the teacher as much as she should have. She goes on to explain that she was more concerned with getting into a

classroom at the time and felt happy to get a foot in the door. Here you can see that while Kathryn had good intentions, a caring relation did not form and growth did not occur. Feminist philosopher, Nell Noddings (2012) would agree. Noddings (2012) claims that there is no caring relation unless there is a response, regardless of how hard the carer tried to care. After sharing this story, Kathryn realizes how much she has grown as a coach and a teacher.

In a study looking to understand the human essence of the expert teacher, Agne (1999) found that master teachers' interactions are characterized by their call to care. In this regard, experienced instructional coaches, such as Kathryn, who are generally considered expert teachers, may reflect an ethic of care in their work. To go back to our sculpting metaphor, to effectively sculpt a block of stone, Rusbult, Finkel, and Kumashiro (2009) explain that "the sculptor must not only understand the ideal form slumbering in the block but must also understand the block per se –what possibilities are inherent in the block and what flaws must be circumvented" (p. 308). A good coach cares about the coachee's well-being, promotes trust, understands the coachee's actual self and knows how to affirm the coachee's ideal self. In this sense, a coach should differentiate instruction for each coachee. This is something that Kathryn now realizes. By no means is this an easy process, but to establish a growth mindset and encourage genuine change we need to work through resistance and understand and validate individual needs and desires along the way.

Sculpting, like relationship building is a time intensive endeavor. For instance, coaches and coachees need time to collaborate, to generate ideas, and reflect on their learning just like the sculptor who slowly and lovingly chisels, carves, and polishes the

stone to reveal the form within. In a study by Marsh et al. (2008), many coaches and administrators noted that time was a key factor in generating trust with teachers, establishing rapport and relationships and to ultimately influence teacher practice. All the participants in the study brought up the notion of time as a barrier to their professional learning. Some found it difficult to find time to work collaboratively and others felt that administrators were downloading too much work on coaches not allowing them enough time to work in classrooms. Although time was mentioned as an issue, it is important to mention that in all three cases, the coaches and coachees in this study had been working together, on and off, for two or more years. Over that period, all participants expressed that they had developed strong coaching relationships.

Beyond influencing teacher practice and confidence, Ross (1992) found that student achievement was higher in classrooms of teachers who had more contact with their coach. In today's busy world, we all complain about a lack of time but carving out extra time for a teacher and coach to collaborate is especially significant in the coaching relationship. To establish a strong coaching presence in a school, Strahan, Geitner, and Lodico (2010) share that the 'social work' of the coach takes several years. These time factors are something that administrators need to consider when setting up coaching models and schedules in schools.

As coaching is not a quick-fix solution to changing teacher practice, some administrators question the return on investment of the coaching model. Along with time, it also has been suggested that if the coaching model is too loosely structured, it may fall flat (Goodwin, 2013). In a study of a loosely structured math peer coaching model, Murray, Ma, and Mazur (2009) found no positive effects on student achievement.

However, the researchers noted that the coaches did not receive training on how to coach and were not identified as experts but as peers. Furthermore, the coaching conversations tended to be superficial and non-confrontational providing little guidance to teachers (as cited in Goodwin, 2013). By comparison, a study by Allen, Pianta, Gregory, Mikami, and Lun (2011) found significant effects on student achievement after two years of a structured coaching approach that included expert coaches reviewing classroom video recordings, providing descriptive feedback, and steps for improvement (as cited in Goodwin, 2013). Using these two examples as opposite ends of the spectrum of coaching initiatives, the coaching model used in the school board in this study falls somewhere in between. The coaches have received significant training on coaching and instructional strategies; work with teachers using a scaffolded approach and have a formal role. However, as mentioned by the participants in this study, there is a need for improvement overall. The roles and responsibilities of the coaches in this school board vary; some spend more time working on P.D. or doing some administrative tasks while others spend more time working with the coachees directly. Also, although some coaches have used video recording with coachees, this is still rather rare. Furthermore, coaches are still rather reticent to be considered experts or provide deep constructive feedback to teachers. Encouragingly, research suggests that “the longer the coaching relationship exists and grows, the deeper and more critical the conversations can become” (Rainville, 2007, p.55).

The coaches in this study realize that there is definitely room to grow as professionals and as a program, especially since the school board has reduced the role and provides fewer professional development sessions to new coaches. All coaches in

this study expressed their frustration over the evolution of the role. Victoria explains that a number of coaches have given up their roles due to these changes.

The coaches in this study are beginning to feel undervalued and do not know what future the coaching role will have in schools as there is no guarantee the role will be funded from one year to the next. As discussed above, instructional coaching has the potential to yield results but not without the proper leadership, investment of time, sustained commitment to the program, and the implementation of a structured and consistent approach. As with any new initiative, there is a need for sufficient time and support to ensure proper implementation, otherwise school boards end up with a revolving door of superficially executed initiatives (Daly, Moolenaar, & Carrier, 2010). The growth of bamboo provides a useful metaphor for the time needed to cultivate professional growth under the coaching model. After planting a seed, the bamboo rhizome root system takes several years to establish, during which time little bamboo shoots up out of the ground. However, after the root system is in place, the growth is astonishing. The bamboo shoots up more than 20 meters in less than four months. The bamboo metaphor is fairly obvious. There needs to be a committed investment in the 'root system' of coaching to ensure a strong foundation is built - the building of relationships, the establishment of trust and affirmation, the structures and processes of coaching are all important factors that need time to flourish. Without this investment, there will be little growth above ground that administrators wish to see—the increases in student achievement, improved teacher efficacy, increased commitment to professional learning, and the establishment of a culture of learning, flexibility, and resilience amongst staff. There is a Japanese proverb that says “The bamboo that bends is stronger than the

oak that resists.” The rewards of the coaching model will not be actualized without a serious investment in the model itself.

In all the schools sampled in this study and in this particular school board, there has been a concerted effort to increase professional development opportunities for staff over the last five years according to the participants interviewed. With the addition of release time for professional learning communities, collaborative inquiry groups and the incorporation of literacy and math foci in school and board improvement plans, there are more occasions for staff to work collaboratively and a closer focus on student learning needs. For each of these new initiatives there is an expectation from administration that the instructional coach be a central player in ensuring these professional learning opportunities are valuable and carried out by staff members. Increasingly, staff is ‘voluntold’ to become part of various professional learning communities to encourage a broader participation amongst staff. When coaching was strictly on a voluntary basis, many coaches worked with the same teachers on a repeated basis and pockets of staff were able to avoid participating in school initiatives. With that said, and the caveat that there are pockets of staff that resist being part of such initiatives to date, the participants in this study expressed the valuable ‘ripple effect’ that happens in the school as a consequence of being part of a coaching relationship. After being involved in coaching, teachers and coaches feel more comfortable and confident sharing their work with others, whether it is within their department or within a professional learning community in the school. This, in turn, creates stronger social networks geared towards professional learning in the school. This is consistent with a variety of studies that suggest social relationships may influence teaching practice by creating a safe environment in which

teachers can experiment with instructional strategies without the fear of being ridiculed or judged (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Moolenaar, & Slegers, 2010).

The ‘ripple effect’ is an important indicator of an increasingly collaborative school culture. Kathryn’s story of the ‘dancing guy on the hill’ aptly highlights how once trust is established and someone has the courage to take a risk, others will have an easier time following suit. The more ‘ripples’ created, the more likely the instructional practices will spread through the school. To get a sense of how the coachees in this study have grown since collaborating with a coach, all the coaches suggested that the coachees would make good coaches themselves. In fact, Emily refers to some of the teachers as “mini-coaches” who share best practices amongst other staff members. From a social network perspective, the teacher’s relationships with colleagues are key to student learning, teaching, and educational change (Moolenaar, 2012). It would seem likely that the positive relations sprouting from the increased comfort level of teachers or ‘mini-coaches’ sharing best practices will eventually have a positive impact on the three factors mentioned above. Considering how coaching encourages teacher collaboration, it would be interesting to apply social network statistical models (Moolenaar, 2012) to analyze how patterns of teacher relationships change during and after the implementation of coaching models in schools and if this change is related to a shift in school culture or overall school improvement.

### ***Power and Resistance***

From a poststructuralist perspective, every human relationship is a struggle and a negotiation of power. French philosopher Michel Foucault (1984/1997) had this to say about the nature of relations of power:

“When I speak of relations of power, I mean that in human relationships, whether they involve verbal communication, ... or amorous, institutional, or economic relationships, power is always present: I mean a relationship in which one person tries to control the conduct of another... these power relations are mobile, they can be modified, they are not fixed once and for all. (p.292)

Therefore, in any relationship, (such as the instructional coaching relationship), relations of power are always present. Foucault (1991), put it succinctly, “Power is everywhere,’ diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge and ‘regimes of truth’” (p.122). It has “microscopic dimensions, small intimate, everyday dimensions” (Collins & Blot, 2003, p. 5) and it is constantly being negotiated as the relational dynamics (i.e. between coach and coached) shift from context to context.

Power shifts and struggles come up repeatedly in the coaching literature in the relationships between coach and coachee (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; Rainville & Jones, 2008) and this study is no exception. Although all participants entered the coaching relationship voluntarily and identified as being part of a positive coaching relationship, all faced struggles as they try to negotiate power. Predominantly, these struggles occurred at the onset of the relationship before trust was truly established. Here Madeline shares her initial apprehensions working with the coach: “I didn’t know what to

expect...I was a little bit apprehensive...is she going to be judging my teaching?" This is a common sentiment across most teachers as they navigate their new relationship.

According to Rainville and Jones (2008), these power struggles are less inhibitive when there is an informal relationship between coach and teacher already in place. This was precisely the case in all three coaching relationships presented in this study. The power struggles vary across the relationships but most of major power struggles shared lie outside of the immediate coaching relationship - struggles with administration, department heads and other staff members. Common struggles within were centered on insecurity, equality, and autonomy as the coach and coachee negotiated power in their relationships.

Where there are relations of power, there is resistance (Foucault, 1984/1997). According to Foucault (1984/1997), for power relations to come into play, there must be some degree of freedom. With freedom, there is necessarily the possibility of resistance in the relationship. The concept of resistance comes up repeatedly in the instructional coaching literature, especially in regards to teacher resistance against the pressure to change instructional practice (Dole & Donaldson, 2006; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001), which is a major concern for many coaches (Toll, 2005). Teachers may resist coaches who position themselves as 'experts' in terms of knowledge, they may resist the normative discourse of a correct method of teaching favoring their local knowledge, and they may refuse to be observed, judged, and examined by a literacy coach; this resistance may be overt or covert (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010). Audrey explains that she can see why teachers do not want coaches to tell them 'this is how you have to teach.' She goes on to say that teachers are territorial, are afraid to lose their structured classroom approach, and

can't be forced into doing something they don't want to do; the approach the coach takes is of paramount importance. Many coaches attribute their lack of success to stubborn, resistant teachers without questioning perceptions of power as it relates to the coaching role (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010).

If coaches are not aware of the power dynamics in relationships and play the role of 'expert,' the coach may inadvertently prevent trust and dialogue from occurring (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007). However, if the coach resists being considered an 'expert' by significantly downplaying his or her role and being non-confrontational, there will be little guidance for teachers and no positive effects on student achievement (Murray, Ma, & Mazur, 2009). Madeline, although quite comfortable in the coaching relationship, is quick to emphasize that the coach is "not above her," but an equal. She consistently downplays the role of the coach in order to feel more secure about her own teaching. Emily, as her coach, is aware of the importance of treating teachers as equals and sees Madeline in this way. Although this research did not observe coach-coachee conversations, it may be of future interest to see if the coaching conversations and practices between coach and coachee reach the depth needed to truly improve teaching practice and increase student achievement. Although all participants identified as being part of a positive coaching relationship, it does not imply that they are working to their full professional potential. Knight (2011) suggests that coaches who are most successful "embody a paradoxical mixture of ambition and humility" (p.126) to work successfully with teachers. Although it is important to be attuned to the role of power and how it is negotiated in the coaching relationship, Foucault makes it clear that power is not only a

negative coercive force but also a necessary, productive and positive force in society (Foucault, 1984/1997).

Beyond resisting 'expert' status, coaches may also resist having a fixed role; they may oppose sharing power in the coaching partnership; they may resist pressure from administration, or resist dominant discourses at play in their work (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013). Among these examples, the coaches in this study struggled most with the dominant discourse at work and the influence of administration at either the school or board level. Both Emily and Victoria want to dispel the myth that they are closely tied to administration. Emily shares that some teachers feel she is a 'spy' for the principal or "on his side" because of how closely she works with him. Her defensive tone in the interview suggests that she is looking for validation for this relationship even though she realizes that it is not helping her make friends on staff. She seems torn between pleasing the boss and getting buy-in from staff. Victoria, by contrast, has been teaching a long time and expresses to teachers that she doesn't have 100% buy-in to every board initiative and wants teachers to know that she only promotes instructional strategies that she feels have value. Victoria asserts her autonomy and professional judgment as a way to negate the alignment with administration.

Although some of the coaches struggled with being seen as tied to administration, according to the literature, principal leadership is a critical dimension to ensure teachers participate in the coaching process (Matsumura et al., 2009; 2010; Marsh et al., 2010; Mangin, 2009). Principals need to publically identify the coach as valuable to staff and grant the coach professional autonomy (Matsumura et al., 2009). In the case of Victoria, the principal did not go out of his way to promote coaching to staff, whereas, in the case

of Emily, the principal micromanaged the role to a certain degree, removing some autonomy away from the coach. Kathryn who seemed to have the least power struggles with administration expressed that her principal was very supportive of her in the role:

Oh he's always been phenomenal... I have to say he has been extremely supportive. I think he understood right from the start and I've never been in an awkward position which makes it really nice too..."

With the confidence of the principal behind her and his outward support, Kathryn seemed to have an easier time reaching larger numbers of staff in comparison to both Emily and Audrey. In fact, her goal before retirement was to work with everyone in the building at least once, and she managed to attain her goal. For accountability sake, Kathryn kept the principal informed on the great work happening in her school. Here is how she would share her work with the principal, "So I've been working on this particular strategy or you'll never guess what happened in so and so's room... we did this phenomenal thing, you want to come see?" It is easy to see that Kathryn's positivity is contagious. Kathryn also shares how the principal gets actively involved in the coaching process, which is very important according to Matsumura et al. (2009). She relays a story where the principal came into Audrey's classroom while they were working on 'foldables' (note-taking strategy) with the class and he made a foldable as well to take notes. The students were impressed and thought it was cool that the principal got involved. The above stories illustrate the pivotal role of principal leadership in the work of a coach and the delicate wielding of power that takes place to ensure buy-in from staff. The coach-principal relationship needs to be considered as an important piece of the coaching model of

professional development. An area of future research may be to explore the relationships between principals and coaches as they work towards creating cultures of collaboration.

Beyond administration within the school, all the coaches shared resistance to the board's direction and influence on the evolution of the coaching role. Victoria seems to be the most disheartened as she discussed the future of the role. She seems to be experiencing a loss of identity and autonomy in the role, feels undervalued, and questions whether she will stay with the role much longer. With less time to do the role, less time to collaborate and share best practices with other coaches across the board, with an increased focus on OSSLT preparation and Student Success initiatives, and an increased number of administrative tasks, Victoria shares many areas of concern.

In this discussion on power and resistance, we have examined the role of the poststructural construct of power in the instructional coaching relationship. It is also important to make explicit that power can be found in the "micro-politics of the research and the researched; as well as in the broader social and political relationships" (such as in 'discourse' communities mentioned above) (Gaventa & Cornwell, 2001). Consequently, power cannot be ignored in discussions of relationships, whether they are between researcher and researched, coach and coached, coach and administration, or between teachers and educational institutions.

### ***Sociocultural Theory***

Due to the situated nature of learning, literacy practices, such as instructional coaching, cannot be understood in isolation -context must be considered (Rainsville, 2007). Hunt and Handsfield (2013) explain, "the work of literacy coaches is deeply

affected by the particulars of the local context” (p. 74). Contextual factors such as interpersonal relationships, roles, prior knowledge, physical space, policy contexts, required curriculum, high-stakes testing, issues of class, race, and gender as well as the history, culture, and structure of the educational institution, provide some insight into the variety of social contexts at work in instructional coaching relationships (Alfred, 2002; Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; Al Otaiba, Smartt, & Dole, 2008; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010, Rainville & Jones, 2008). Accordingly, although all participants in this study work for the same southwestern Ontario school board at the high school level, each participant shared insight into the differences their local context presented and how it affected their coaching relationship, their individual growth, and the social networks created in the school. For all the coaches and coachees involved, the nature of the principal leadership or the influence of other teacher leaders stood out and seemed to impact the local context significantly.

Also, within a variety of social contexts, people (such as the coach and coachee) enact a multitude of identities or roles. The coach and the coached do not have one static identity, their identities are multiple, fluid, co-constructed, and negotiated across contexts (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013). Since the inception of the coaching role at the school board in this study, there has been a lack of clarity and misunderstandings surrounding the nature of the role. This is a common complaint across the coaching literature (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Marsh et al., 2008; Mraz et al., 2008). Coaches take on roles such as resource providers, administrative assistants, OSSLT experts, guide on the side, P.D. provider, classroom teacher, Student Success assistant, and friend. Consequently, the coaches in this study experienced a significant amount of change in their roles over the

years and each coach has had to navigate a nuanced and complex role with limited guidance. Victoria explains that she feels stretched in the role and that the role has evolved but not for the better:

okay, it's evolved...I'm doing a lot more tasks that are considered administrative...I'm involved in P.D., I'm involved in almost every committee, like every initiative that comes across the principal's desk...so, it's evolved that way...I'm spending less time in the classroom.

The change in role has gotten to the point where Victoria shares that she “doesn't feel like a coach anymore” and that she sees a lot of frustration within coaching with many coaches giving up their roles. Emily share concerns over the amount of time she is ‘pulled’ out to plan P.D. and how many teachers see her as an extension of administration. This sheds some light into the problems with the coaching model currently applied at this school board. Also, due to the fact that funding for the role is decided on an annual basis, there is always some insecurity surrounding whether the role will be around in the upcoming year or whether the initiative will be set aside like so many other initiatives that have come and gone over the years.

Context is of utmost importance to the social construction of meaning in a sociocultural environment. However, Gee (1990) explains that we cannot fully understand context unless it is situated within the particular social group of interest. These social groups, or “Discourse” communities as labeled by Gee (1990), have their own cultures, values, and expectations that contextualize the learning taking place. Each discourse community also has its own recursive identity, meaning, “the members are

constantly shaping and renegotiating the identity of the community” (Alfred, 2002, p. 9). It is important to note that from a sociocultural perspective, the concept of ‘discourse’ encompasses more than just language use; it implies a whole network of social relationships and practices (Alfred, 2002). Within instructional coaching relationships, both the coach and coachee are tied to multiple discourse communities in their school board that will ultimately influence the learning that takes place in the coaching relationship. For example, it could include particular classrooms, departments of study (i.e. English, Mathematics), professional learning communities (PLCs), the school as a whole, the particular board office and its curriculum department to name a few.

For Lauren in particular, several experiences almost made her disengage completely from professional learning as she was most dramatically affected by various discourse communities in her school. One example she shares is her experience in the English department. As a way to subvert her department head, who was not receptive to professional learning, Lauren created a ‘underground’ professional learning community, in which Victoria was also involved, to get the support she needed as a young teacher. She fondly describes this discourse community of teachers who were eager to share resources and engage in reflective practice. However, this discourse community was effectively dissolved when the English department head got wind of what they were doing making everyone involved uncomfortable. Effectively, she was experiencing workplace bullying. According to Victoria, the school culture is challenging, there aren’t any ‘joiners’ per se and teachers tend to shut down automatically if they don’t feel they have ownership in the professional learning. Only small pockets of teachers are willing to engage professionally. For Lauren, Victoria was the rock she could count on despite the

problems she was experiencing in her school. This story emphasizes that every coach has a different set of sociocultural norms that he or she must circumvent on the road to improving teacher practice and initiating change. Some sets of discourse communities prove to be ‘tougher nuts to crack’ than others.

Although discourse communities can be sites for learning, it is important to make clear that they can also work to constrain by setting up “boundaries, parameters, and criteria for membership” (Alfred, 2002, p.10) as highlighted above. Research in teacher leadership suggests that the school culture often impedes teacher leadership as the presence of teacher leaders can conflict with the prevailing norms of isolation, individualism and egalitarianism that dominant school culture (York-Barr & Duke, 2004) as highlighted in Lauren’s story. These limitations are linked to issues of power and resistance.

### ***Integrating Themes***

Across the three dominant themes that emerged from the data on instructional coaching relationships, there is considerable overlap. Figure 4 highlights the connections between themes in a Venn diagram.

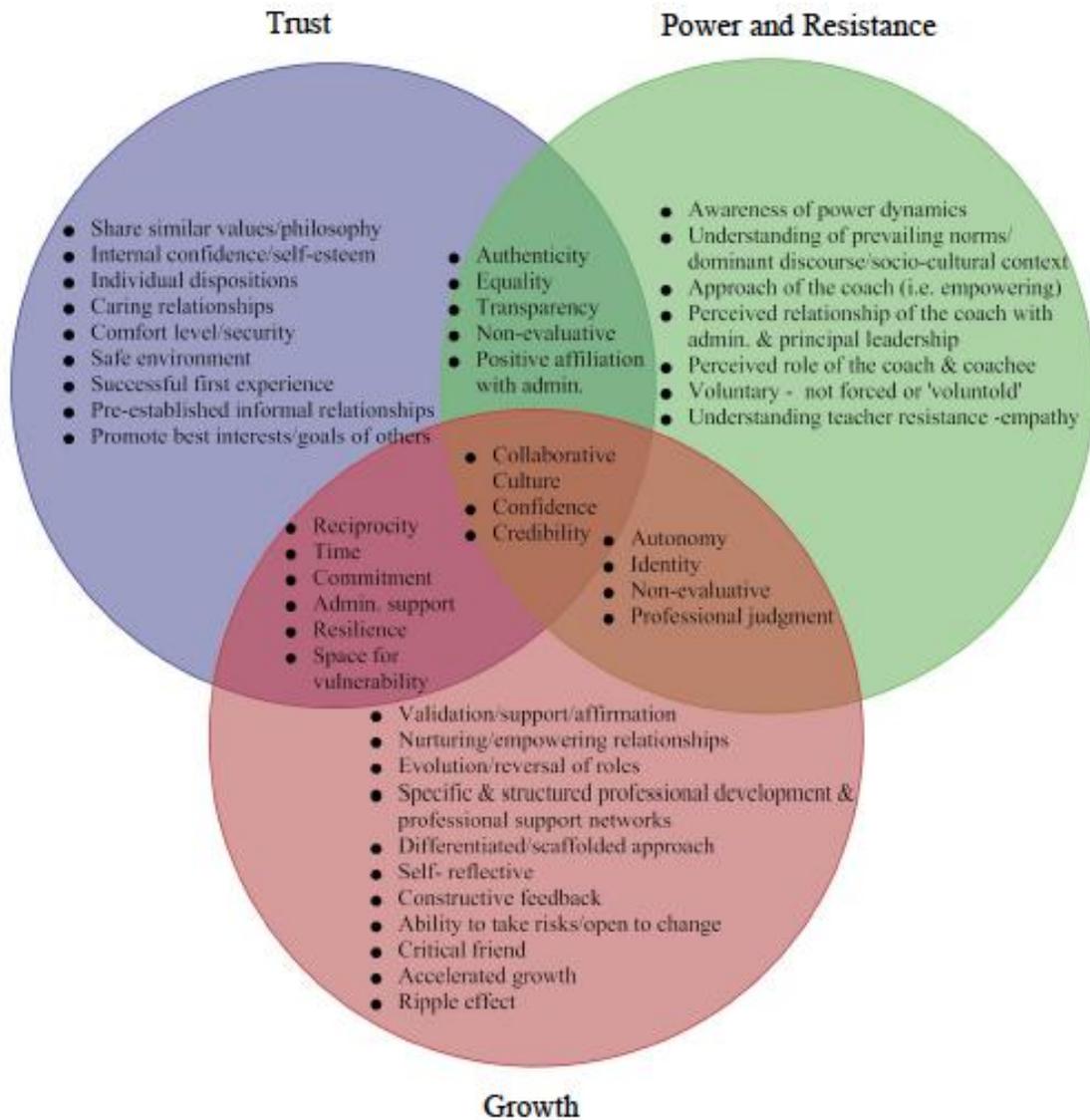


Figure 4: Integrated Themes: Instructional Coaching Relationships

Looking to the connection between trust and growth, it is clear that to achieve growth, a strong foundation of trust between coach and coachee as well as with administration must be established. The time and commitment put into the coaching relationship allows for trust to be developed and, in turn, for growth to occur. In coaching relationships there is a need to create safe spaces for individuals to be vulnerable as they begin to take risks. Also, trust needs to be established to ensure that the partners in the

relationship are resilient so they can overcome any setbacks/hurdles en route to professional growth. For trust to flourish in a relationship and for mutual growth to occur, relational practices should foster reciprocity among individuals.

Looking to the connections between trust and power and resistance, coaching relationships needs to be authentic, transparent, non-evaluative, and foster a sense of equality so trust can be established and teacher resistance can subside. A positive affiliation with administration is a key factor in building trust among staff and lesson the power of hierarchical power structures embedded in schools.

To achieve a growth mindset in coaching relationships, there is a need for all parties involved to have a sense of professional autonomy and identity that is consistent and clear. A respect for each other's professionalism is key. Administration should value the professional judgment of the coach and be careful not to undermine or micromanage their role. There is a need for administration and coaches to collaborate and share a similar vision for staff professional learning. It should be joint work. The coach should also respect the judgment and professionalism of the coachee. Without this respect, relationships may become divisive and stunt growth from occurring.

Integrating all three themes, 1) Trust, 2) Growth, and 3) Power and Resistance, there were three important sub-themes that were shared. The first was "Collaborative Culture." A collaborative culture is built on foundations of trust, manages power dynamics, and ultimately fosters growth. It encourages participation and sharing within a safe and comfortable environment where those involved are nurturing and supporting each other. Second, confidence is a common link between all three themes. To build trust,

confidence of personal abilities increases the likelihood for trust to occur. Also, the coach and administration need to feel confident in their role as instructional leaders and exude this to staff. Having confidence and a high self-esteem opens up the space for risk-taking and growth. Third, the credibility of administration and the coach, are of paramount importance when establishing trust and working through resistance. Buy-in from staff to participate and grow from professional learning is more likely when all parties are viewed as credible.

### ***Implications for Practice***

The current study focused on the lived experience of instructional coaching relationships that were deemed positive from both the perspective of the coach and the coachee. Through an interpretative phenomenological approach, this study identified claims and concerns that are valuable and revealing about instructional coaching relationships and it is my hope they resonate with readers in the educational field.

This study has several practical implications for instructional coaching. First, each participant enters the coaching relationship with different levels of receptivity to developing personal or professional relationships and garnering trust. These are unique to each individual. The relevant dispositions of each partner in the relationship (e.g. attachment orientations, self-esteem, self-differentiation) can provide insight into why some individuals are receptive to coaching or not. Although unique to individuals across relationships, having an awareness of these varied dispositions can help coaches and administrators gain a deeper understanding of how best to approach individuals involved in instructional coaching. It would be best for coaches to begin working with those most

receptive to coaching and who have a readiness to change. As these relationships develop, the rippling effect that slowly permeates the school may encourage those not originally receptive to open up to the possibility of entering a coaching relationship. For coaching relationships to work, both parties need to be willing participants – not forced. All participants in this study came to coaching of their own volition. Also, it is imperative that coaches differentiate/tailor the learning for each individual and promote individual goals and address teacher and student learning needs. For administrators, it would be wise to hire a coach who is a successful classroom teacher who has the respect of the staff, is humble yet self-confident, understands power dynamics, is self-aware, and has a kindness that is genuine and affirming. Ultimately, the coach works towards empowering the coachee to the point where the coachee could envision him/herself being able to inspire others to do the same. There should also be some sense of reciprocity in the relationship. This was the case in each of the relationships in this study.

Second, it is important to note that coaching relationships do not happen in a vacuum and thus, the social context and the local “Discourse” communities need to be considered (Gee, 1990). The presence of instructional coaches may conflict with the prevailing norms in the school and add a layer of hierarchy that changes the power dynamics in the school. The desire for autonomy, egalitarianism, and non-confrontation are all hurdles that the coach has to carefully work through to foster a culture of professional learning and collaboration amongst staff while decreasing resistance amongst staff. This is where principal and teacher leadership is of utmost importance and can help to set the tone for staff as they begin to open up their practice. However, teachers need to feel that the coach, first and foremost, has their best interests in mind.

Having too close of an association with administration, may cause discomfort among staff as suggested by the participants in this study and ties into the theme of trust.

Third, for a coaching program to be successful, it is crucial that policy makers and administrators understand that the coaching model of professional development is not a quick-fix solution and requires ample time, support and structure for it to be effective. Professional growth and change do not happen overnight. It is important to point out that while time and support are important factors, without a structured approach where there is a clear and consistent role of the coach along with specific and ongoing training for the coach tied to a specific coaching process, coaching may not produce the desired results. Also, it is recommended that there be some sort of tracking of coaching as it plays out in schools to monitor and ensure it is doing what it was set out to do.

### ***Limitations of this Study***

While the current study entered new territory and explored the lived experience of instructional coaching, it is certainly not without its limitations. It is important to note that my experiences and perspectives have an influence on the analysis of the data, as qualitative analysis is a subjective process. Another researcher may have analyzed the data differently and produced different results.

One limitation of this study is my relationship with participants. I am an instructional coach for the school board under study in my research. This complicated as well as enhanced my experience as a researcher. I have a professional relationship with all of the coaches in this study and I also knew one out of the three coachees in this study. This gave me easier access to my research participants and allowed me to establish trust

more easily. However, due to the nature of our professional relationships, there is a possibility that the coaches or coachees may not have felt comfortable revealing information that may put them in a negative light or were nervous to open themselves up or fully self-disclose fearing judgment. Although I tried my best to be impartial, non-evaluative, and open-ended, I am sure my positionality had some impact on the interviews with the coaches and the coachees in this study.

Another limitation of this study includes external validity, or the generalizability of the study. This study purposively uses a small sample size and all the participants were female and belonged to one school board in Ontario. These participants were chosen due to their self-reported positive coaching relationship. It will be difficult to apply results to other geographic locations with similar coaching models, as they may not reflect the general population. However, IPA is concerned with the particular experiences of individuals and advocates an in-depth analysis of a small number of participants allowing for exploration into an under-researched topic.

### ***Suggestions for Future Research***

This study helps to illuminate the lived experience of instructional coaching and the instructional coaching relationship. Although a great deal of insight into coaching relationships was gleaned from the insight of participants in this study, the findings of the current study have opened up a variety of potential areas that could be addressed by future research.

After interviewing all the participants and working with the data, I felt that it would be interesting to do a series of interviews with the coaches and coachees to follow

them through various stages of the coaching process as each participant experiences growth and change. This was not possible due to time constraints in my program of study. Also, it may be of interest to interview each coach and coachee immediately after a series of coaching session so that their reflections and comments are immediate and fresh, spurring a flurry of moments where the participants engage in ‘hot cognition’ as they reflect on what just occurred. The researcher may wish to sit in on these coaching sessions so as to be able to witness what their participants will later describe as well as get a sense of the depth of the coaching conversations that the coach and the coachee engage in on their journey of professional growth. Use of audio and video recording could also capture these coaching sessions and enable the researcher to analyze the instructional coaches and coachees at work. Alongside interviews, it would also be of interest to have participants keep diaries or journals documenting their emotions as they navigate the instructional coaching relationship and the professional growth that it engenders. This may allow participants the space to share and reflect on their emotions in a more private manner. These additional sources of data may provide further insight into the defining moments that happen to solidify instructional coaching relationships. This is something that could be tackled in future research.

Due to the critical influence of principal leadership on whether or not teachers participate in the coaching process (Matsumura et al., 2009; 2010; Marsh et al., 2010; Mangin, 2009) and the repeated mention of administration’s influence on coaching throughout the interviews in this study, it may be of interest for future research to study the principal/coach relationship to gain insight into how these relationships impede or promote educational leadership and professional growth among administrators and

coaches as well as the way these relationships impact overall staff professional development.

The findings of this study suggest that the coach and coachee are deeply embedded in the social network of the school and that the relationship between coach and coachee can extend beyond the parameters of the immediate relationship –‘rippling’ through the school. Future studies that apply social network statistical models to analyze how patterns of instructional coaching relationships as well as how other teacher relationships change during and after the implementation of coaching models may shed insight into how coaching affects school culture and professional growth amongst staff. Furthermore, teacher self-efficacy scales could also be administered to get a sense of the perceived changes in self-efficacy as teachers work on professional growth with instructional coaches and other staff members.

### ***Conclusion***

This qualitative study explored the lived positive experience of instructional coaching and the instructional coaching relationship in the secondary school setting. The findings of this study have provided a rich and intimate understanding of an instructional coaching through the situated lived experience of coaches and coachees. The focus on the dyadic nature of the coaching relationship allowed for deeper comprehension of the roles of the coach and coachee in the instructional coaching relationship and how these relationships promoted sustained individualized professional growth. Three themes on the lived positive experience of the instructional coaching relationship emerged from the data: 1) Trust 2) Growth and 3) Power and Resistance. Instructional coaching holds great

potential as a professional development model if the relational dynamics are thoroughly understood, acknowledged and addressed and the socio-cultural environment provides the space for professional learning to occur.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix A: Interview Protocol (semi-structured): Instructional Coach**

#### ***Sample Questions for the Instructional Coach:***

What does it mean to be an instructional coach?

How would you describe your school culture in terms of professional learning?

How has your role as a coach changed since you began working in this capacity?

What/who has played a role in shaping you as a coach?

How do you see yourself as an instructional coach?

How do others see you as a coach?

What are your coaching strengths? Challenges?

Can you describe a particular coaching relationship you feel is successful?

How would you define success?

What makes it successful?

What do you feel made this particular relationships “work” better than others? In what capacity?

What is a typical session with a teacher like for you? Describe it for me.

Use three adjectives to describe your relationship with the teacher.

Describe your relationship with the teacher.

How has this relationship changed your own practice?

What encourages teachers to implement new strategies consistently?

How did the coaching relationship evolve during the different stages of coaching?

What factors are important in a good coaching relationship?

What factors can have a negative effect upon the coaching relationship?

How important do you feel the coaching relationship is in relation to coaching effectiveness?

Rate your coaching experience from 1-10. Explain your rationale.

## **Appendix B: Interview Protocol (semi-structured): Teacher (coachee)**

### ***Sample Questions for the Teacher (coachee):***

How would you describe your school culture in terms of professional learning?

What is your perspective on professional development initiatives such as instructional coaching?

What is a typical session with the instructional coach look like?

How long have you been working with the coach at your school? How often?

Use three adjectives to describe your relationship with the instructional coach.

Describe your relationship (quality) with the instructional coach.

How has working with an instructional coach changed your teaching practice?

Has your relationships with other teachers changed since working with the instructional coach?

Would you recommend instructional coaching? In what situations?

What makes you stick with the instructional strategies?

How did the coaching relationship evolve during the different stages of coaching?

What factors are important in a good coaching relationship?

What factors can have a negative effect upon the coaching relationship?

How important do you feel the coaching relationship is in relation to coaching effectiveness?

How do you see yourself as a teacher?

Rate your coaching experience from 1-10. Explain your rationale

## **Appendix C: Recruitment Script (E-mail to Instructional Coaches)**

Dissemination: A teacher consultant who works with all secondary coaches at the GECD SB disseminated this email once ethics approval was granted.

Hi,

My name is Deanna Fougere, a M.Ed. student working under the supervision of Dr. Geri Salinitri at the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor and I am looking for participants for my research study. I am also a science teacher and instructional coach at Sandwich Secondary School. You are receiving this email because you are a secondary instructional coach at the Greater Essex County District School Board (GECD SB). This email was forwarded to you from a teacher consultant, at the GECD SB.

The title of my research project is *Instructional Coaching Relationships: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*. The purpose of this study is to explore instructional coaching, including the coaching relationship, from the positive experience of instructional coaches and secondary teachers who voluntarily participated in coaching (coachee) in the secondary school setting. Therefore, I am looking for participants who feel they have had a positive experience with coaching and would like to share their experience.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to: 1) Give one in-depth interview on your experience with instructional coaching and the coaching relationship. The interview will last between 60 and 90 minutes and will be completed at the GECD SB board office at a time convenient for both you and the investigator.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. I would like to assure you that the study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at the University of Windsor. However, the final decision about participation is yours.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at [fouger1@uwindsor.ca](mailto:fouger1@uwindsor.ca). I will then send a confirmation email indicating your participation, and to set up a time that is convenient for you. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact myself, Ms. Deanna Fougere, at XXX-XXX-XXXX or Dr. Salinitri at XXX-XXX-XXXX, ext. XXXX.

Sincerely,

*Deanna Fougere*

## Appendix D: Recruitment Script (E-mail to Coachees)

Hi,

My name is Deanna Fougere, a M.Ed. student working under the supervision of Dr. Geri Salinitri at the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor and I am looking for participants for my research study. I am also a science teacher and instructional coach at Sandwich Secondary School. You are receiving this email because you are a secondary teacher involved in coaching (coachee) at the Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB). This email was forwarded to you from the principal at your school.

The title of my research project is *Instructional Coaching Relationships: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*. The purpose of this study is to explore instructional coaching, including the coaching relationship, from the positive experience of instructional coaches and secondary teachers who voluntarily participated in coaching (coachee) in the secondary school setting. Therefore, I am looking for participants who feel they have had a positive experience with coaching and would like to share their experience.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

1) Give one in-depth interview on your experience with instructional coaching and the coaching relationship. The interview will last between 60 and 90 minutes and will be completed at the GECDSB board office at a time convenient for both you and the investigator.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. I would like to assure you that the study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at the University of Windsor. However, the final decision about participation is yours.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at [fouger1@uwindsor.ca](mailto:fouger1@uwindsor.ca). I will then send a confirmation email indicating your participation, and to set up a time that is convenient for you. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact myself, Ms. Deanna Fougere, at XXX-XXX-XXXX or Dr. Salinitri at XXX-XXX-XXXX, ext. XXXX.

Sincerely,

*Deanna Fougere*

**Appendix E: Data Analysis: Developing Emerging Themes (Sample)**

**Interview 1: Coachee (English teacher (ENG1P; ENG3U etc), 6 years teaching experience, female; 3 kids)**

<b>Date Interviewed: Saturday February 25, 2012 (~12 pm)</b>		
<b>Emergent Themes</b>	<b>Original Transcript</b>	<b>Exploratory Comments</b>
<p>Equality</p> <p>Time</p> <p>Insecurity</p> <p>Power &amp; Resistance</p> <p>Resistance of Coach as Expert</p> <p>Growth</p>	<p>Interviewer: So what do you see as your role in the coaching relationship?</p> <p>Interviewee: Well I... I...the coaching relationship is a partnership I find, I mean, the coach has these ideas because they've had the time to go to the workshops to get the information to bring back to their schools right? Whereas I don't have the time because I have a full schedule so I'm teaching the kids. So, I don't find that the coach is above me or anything... we work together. We're both professionals... we're both teachers, we both have an interest in making the students successful... Um, her job is sort of to... get the ideas and bring them to the school. And my job is sort of, okay, "how can we implement these ideas into my classroom." So I sort of think of it as a symbiotic relationship; we both benefit,</p>	<p>Sees coaching relationship as a partnership...again focuses on equality</p> <p>Issue of time</p> <p>Doesn't want to feel like less of a teacher compared with the coach...attempts to justify why she doesn't know what the coach knows- suggests insecurity in teaching</p> <p>Seems to be saying that all would be equal if she had the time the coach had to get the P.D. etc.</p> <p>Again clarifying that coach is not 'above' her...both professionals/both teachers/both interested in kids' success –issue of equality</p> <p>Sort of downplays role of coach/expertise of coach</p> <p>Symbiotic relationship –notion of reciprocity, interdependence,</p>

<p>Trust</p> <p>Growth</p> <p>Establishing trust validation</p>	<p>because she goes to these workshops and she sees these ideas or hears these things from these professionals... but, you know a workshop isn't going to tell you... how... what's that going to look like in a 1P English class... you don't know that from a workshops... But then, when she brings these ideas to me and I put it into my 1P English class, then we look at things and we can say, you know... like an example is that we had a jigsaw (literacy strategy) one time... and we we're like, you know, this is a great idea... the kids are going to gain knowledge... but when we got to the jigsaw... when we implemented it in the class we were like... okay here are a couple of things we can do so the next jigsaw... it'll make it better and kids will understand it more... so, yah, it is a really good relationship because now, after seeing that work in my class, or seeing, okay this didn't work the way I thought it was going to work... but just by watching the dynamics I think that with this, this, and this we could make it better next time we do the jigsaw. When she leaves me</p>	<p>mutually beneficial; helps to establish trust</p> <p>Theory vs. practice</p> <p>Reflection of practice –debrief of lesson</p> <p>‘Really good relationship now’ –suggests she feels more comfortable and willing to trust and open up</p> <p>Explains that the ideas don't always work out but can be modified –seems to be more confident with the idea that not all lessons have to work out –even the one with the coach didn't turn out as well as planned –this experience seems to help improve</p>
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<p>Ripple effect</p> <p>equality</p> <p>Reciprocity</p> <p>Ripple effect</p> <p>Power &amp; Resistance</p>	<p>and she goes and works with another teacher, it's going to be better for that other teacher because they've had the experience... because she's had that experience through me... So yah, she gets something out of being in my class just as I get something from her in my class. So, it's a real partnership, I think, and I think it's beneficial to everybody and it benefits everybody down the line.</p> <p>Because the next time she implements that idea those kids are going to gain benefit because she sees how the scenario runs in a real class... you know?</p>	<p>her self-efficacy and feel that the coach is not above her –coach isn't perfect and makes mistakes too</p> <p>Explains how her experience with coach can benefit other teachers...really focused on the coach being no more knowledgeable than herself (just different skill set).</p> <p>Reciprocity</p> <p>Real partnership...beneficial to everybody</p> <p>Almost suggests that coach can use her as guinea pig to test out ideas...so other classes benefit...kind of suggests that coach is not so competent?</p> <p>'real' class –insinuation that much of what the coach brings to the table is theoretically based and needs to be tested</p>
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**Appendix F: Development of Themes**

<b>ABSTRACTION LEADING TO DEVELOPMENT OF SUPER-ORDINATE THEMES</b>					
<i>Coachee -Madeline</i>	<i>Coach -Emily</i>	<i>Coach -Kathryn</i>	<i>Coachee -Audrey</i>	<i>Coach -Victoria</i>	<i>Coachee -Lauren</i>
<b>Interview #1</b>	<b>Interview #2</b>	<b>Interview #3</b>	<b>Interview #4</b>	<b>Interview #5</b>	<b>Interview #6</b>
Pressure (from parents/from admin) for student success; concern for rigor  Resistance to # of initiatives  Concern about living up to expectations  Ripple effect  Time  Envy  Lack of support/availability of coach  Collaboration/another set of eyes/two	Coach as helper  Collaboration  Role of coach  Building a positive culture/improvement  Trust  Coach as knowledgeable  Time  Teacher resistance to coaching/change  Importance of feedback  Pride	Comfort  Confidence  Change  Time  Ripple effect  Sharing  Back-and-forth relationship  Importance of PD  Coach as cheerleader  Role of coach  Coach as leader/empower people	Student-centric –meet needs of kids  Diff. perspectives/extra set of hands/eyes  Time  Coach as a support/resource provider  * Territorial –still teacher’s classroom  Coachee as messenger/guinea pig  Coachee as ‘coach’  Helping others  Community	Challenging school culture  Collaboration  Improving teacher practice  Meeting students’ needs  Flexibility  Subject-specific struggles  Learning experience for coach  Evolution of role  Increased administrative tasks	Support from principal  Dept. head not supportive  Sharing of resources  Stress  Disengagement  Collaboration  Support  Coach as resource provider  Cessation of sharing among staff  Disillusionment

heads	Coach as ‘mama bear’	Increase independence of coachee	Comfort zone	Decreased time in classroom	Coachee as ‘coach’
Resistance to being judged	Sharing	Gradual release	Availability of coach	Stress	PD –bad rep in school
Student-centric - caring	Role of admin/principal; support	Coach as changer of culture	Follow up/reflection	Increased responsibilities	Sharing personal stories/empathetic
Insecurity	Coach supports	Supports for coach are waning	Positivity	Frustration	Informal coaching
Resistance to coach as expert –focus on equality/partnership; downplays coach’s role	School/board connections	Non-judgmental	Importance of autonomy	Questioning effectiveness	Time
Coach as friend	Unclear roles	Seizing opportunities	Coach as guide	Initiative overload	Coach as friend
Teaching struggles	Struggles with breadth of role	Magic moments in classroom	Social contact between coach/coachee	Working in classrooms	Non-evaluative
Support	Getting in classrooms –most important work	Reflection	Misconceptions	Share best practices	Coachee –clear with needs/wants
Focus on students instead of self	Ties to admin. & teacher resistance; coach as spy	Coachee as leader/coach	Credibility of coach	Coachee as friend	Two heads
Personal growth		Open-minded	Trust	Coachee: open/comfortable	Similar perspectives
Access/fairness – equal opportunities for students	Coach as teacher/learner	Coach – enthusiastic/positive	Caring/thoughtful	Improved practice	Easy relationship
		coach -resistance to being pushy	Understands/responds to needs	Coach as mentor	Accessible
			Informal coaching	Two-way	Confidence
			Confidence		Positive feedback
					Reflective practioner

Similar teaching style/philosophy/on same page	Equality	start where they are	Judgment	relationship	Coachee informally coaching others
Power –resistance to loss of authority/autonomy	Resistance to coach as expert		High quality relationship	Gradual release	Safe place
Trust	Teacher openness/responsiveness	coach –self-awareness	Embarrassment	Reflection/feedback/ Sharing	Fresh eyes/fresh perspective
Confidence	Comfort	passion reignited – magic	Comfort	Concern for student success	Enthusiasm
Support/validation	Open/trusting relationship	increased excitement	Advice	Respect	
Improved practice	Coachee as ‘mini-coach’	gradual release – coachee becomes less dependent on coach	Reassurance	Ripple effect	
Safe relationship	Teacher misconceptions of the role of coach	teacher resistance to openness	Perspective	Coach as a learner	
Leadership skills	Student-centric – focus on success	success for students	Improving practice	Voluntary/not forced	
Sharing	Similar teaching style/philosophy/on same page	importance of evidence	Reflection	Personality	
School benefits		big picture	Flexibility	Misunderstanding of role	
Articulation of needs		first follower	Choice	Coach as resource provider	
Burdens of teaching		reflection	Love of Learning	Coach aligned with admin. –perception	
Appreciation			Working with others/cross-curricular	Coach as listener &	
Reflection			Student engagement		
			Improved assessment		

Future coach?	Support/Validation		Future coach?	observer	
Flexibility	coach as cheerleader		Sharing resources	Time	
Control	start from where they are		Open	50/50 relationship	
Positive self-talk – growth as teacher	coach -resistance to being pushy		What’s best for kids	risk-taking	
	attentive listener		Variety	ownership	
	lack of confidence		Fun for kids	comfort level	
	coach sees coachee with leadership qualities		Change	credibility	
	coachee as advocate		Acceptance	difficulties getting into certain classrooms	
	respect		Voluntary/not forced	space –no common working areas	
	problems with school culture		Insecurity	staff are unwilling	
	coach resistant to being considered an expert		Unclear role	coachee as friend	
	insecurity		Fear	sharing personal experiences	
			Ripple effect	focus on students	
			Coach as springboard for ideas	evolution in kids	
			Fun		
			Personality		

	<p>justification of job/roles</p> <p>stress</p> <p>staff frustration with new ministry policies</p> <p>pressure/stress on teachers –too many initiatives</p> <p>personal attacks on coach/admin (union rep involved)</p> <p>balance between admin and staff</p> <p>communication</p> <p>catering to coachees</p> <p>relationships as continuum</p>		<p>Kindness</p>	<p>same values/parenting ideas</p> <p>comfort</p> <p>coachee as coach</p> <p>confidence</p> <p>admin support</p> <p>dept. head support</p> <p>coaching becoming prescribed/role reduced</p> <p>isolation as coaches</p> <p>Student Success – more high profile</p> <p>Coach as assistant</p> <p>Everyday issues/struggles ignored</p> <p>Coach as vehicle for board</p>	
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				messages/initiatives High turnover of coaches Frustration within coaching Responsibility regarding SEF Politics –role is not stable/lack of funding/uncertain Difficulties in particular subject areas	
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## VITA AUCTORIS

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