Thick and Thin: Variations in Teacher Leader Identity

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Recently, there has been more focus on issues related to the professional development of teacher leaders (TLs), but there is still much to learn. Situated within a larger study, the purpose of this research was to understand the ways in which individuals participated in teacher leadership and how participation and identities shaped and were shaped by communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Specifically, this study focuses on two TLs and the manifestation of what we are describing as 'thick' and 'thin' TL identities. Based on our findings, we see thick identity – that is, a TL identity that is deeply rooted in who the person is – as possibly more desirable than a thin TL identity, or a TL identity in which one might see themselves occasionally as a TL when they are called on to lead. This has implications for the theorizing of and professional development for teacher leadership.

Introduction

For numerous reasons, notions of teacher leadership are riddled with complexity (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Among the less-discussed factors which contribute to this complexity are the diverse perspectives of those involved in researching teacher leadership. As an example, researchers with organizational perspectives have made important contributions to the literature on teacher leadership (e.g., Smylie & Eckert, 2018; Smith, Trygstad, & Hayes, 2018; Gordin, 2010; Scribner & Bradley-Levine, 2010; Spillane, 2006). Among other things, these researchers have contributed to opening up space for teachers as leaders within schools, as theoretical perspectives like distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006) have provided visions of leadership stretched over individuals, including teachers, in schools that move beyond traditional conceptions of leadership as solely the practice of administrators. In this important work, the locus of attention is the organization (e.g., school); as Smylie and Eckert (2018) assert, "The focus...should be on teacher 'leader*ship*' not simply the teacher 'lead*er*'" (p. 571, emphasis original).

However, there have been equally significant contributions to the body of teacher leadership research made by disciplinary focused (e.g., science, math, social studies) teacher educators (e.g., Durias, 2010; Friedman, 2011; Hanuscin, Cheng, Rebello, Sinha, & Muslu, 2014; Criswell, Rushton, McDonald, & Gul, 2017; Luft, Dubois, & Kaufman, 2016). While these researchers may draw on notions of distributed leadership, much of their attention returns to answering questions about ways in which individuals participate (un)successfully in meaningful and influential forms of teacher leadership (e.g., Singh, Yager, Yutakom, Yager, & Ali, 2012; Westfall-Rudd, 2011), as well as ways in which teachers can be further supported to engage in these acts (e.g., Hanuscin et al., 2014; Criswell et al., 2017) within a particular discipline.

This focus on the individual, even if considered in the larger context of how individuals are enmeshed in highly connected webs within organizations (Goldspink, 2007), may emanate from teacher education researchers' concern for the design, implementation, and iteration of programs aimed at supporting the professional development of teachers (pre-service and in-service), both as teacher learners and leaders (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). However, while research is abundant to explain how teachers learn to teach and may develop over time (e.g., Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2008), there is much less research focused on "how individual leadership development processes unfold and what critical experiences help to explain these desirable outcomes" (Poekert, Alexandrou & Shannon, 2016, p. 309). Recently, there has been more focus on issues related to the professional development of teacher leaders (TLs; e.g. Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017; Klein et al., 2018; Smylie & Eckert, 2018; Weiner & Woulfin, 2018), but there is still much to learn concerning how teachers grow to be TLs.

Consequently, this current research – conducted by teacher educators – focused on understanding the ways in which individuals participated (un)successfully in meaningful and influential forms of teacher leadership, even as we recognized the ways in which participation shaped and was shaped by the organizations and policy within which teachers learn and lead. Our focus on participation is nested in communities of practice (CoPs; Lave & Wenger, 1991), where identification as TLs is negotiated by individuals within groups or communities involved in meaningful pursuits in schools. More specifically, this current research, situated within a larger study that was concerned with the development of a model of teacher leadership practice (Campbell, Wenner, Brandon, & Waszkelewicz, in progress), focused on a particularly interesting finding that emerged related to the disparities observed amongst teachers' enactments of teacher leadership.

Review of the Literature and Theoretical Perspectives

In this section, we discuss how teacher leadership has been conceptualized in the literature via descriptions, models, and continua – particularly in terms of the development of TLs over time. We then discuss CoPs and the notion of identity as they relate to each other and the concept of teacher leadership.

Conceptualizations of Teacher Leadership

As previously illustrated, the literature surrounding teacher leadership is comprised of many different angles from which teacher leadership can be studied, while also defining teacher leadership in a multitude of ways. Given our focus on the individual, our definition of TLs is "teachers who maintain K–12 classroom-based teaching responsibilities, while also taking on leadership responsibilities outside of the classroom" (Wenner & Campbell, 2017, p. 140). This definition is consistent with those of many teacher leadership scholars, including Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009), who described a TL as one who leads "within and beyond the classroom" (p. 6), and Margolis (2012), who defined a 'hybrid' TL as one "whose official schedule includes both teaching K-12 students and leading teachers in some capacity" (p. 292).

Taking into account the wide variety of teacher leadership definitions in the literature, it is no surprise that there are a number of different models, progressions, and continua that assist researchers in thinking about what it means to be a TL and how teacher leadership might develop over time. As discussed earlier, some conceptualize teacher leadership at a collective/organizational level while others (such as ourselves) focus on teacher leadership at the individual level. Accordingly, there are models that seek to describe teacher leadership at this level. For example, at the organizational level, Muijs and Harris (2007) described teacher leadership as three different typologies (restricted, emergent, and developed), indicating the degree to which there was shared decision making, teachers were supported to take initiative, and a commitment to supporting teachers to lead within the school.

More common are models/perspectives that describe teacher leadership at the individual level. Some of these models focus on items (skills, characteristics, knowledge, etc.) that impact the work of a TL (e.g. Yarger & Lee, 1994). Other models depict the actions of TLs – often to identify and/or evaluate TLs – such as the Teacher Leader Model Standards (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2012), Danielson's (2006) framework for teacher leadership, and the four 'essentialities' described by Lumpkin, Claxton, and Wilson (2014). Finally, other models attempt to capture the development of TLs, such as Poekert, et al.'s (2016) context-conscious, growth-oriented theory of teacher leadership development and Smulyan's (2016) continuum of teacher leadership from behaviors to stance. This brief summary of teacher leadership models is by no means exhaustive, but rather shared here to provide readers with a sense of the different ways in which we can think about teacher leadership.

Communities of Practice and Teacher Leadership

Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder's (2002) conceptualization of a community of practice (CoP) provides another perspective for thinking about teacher leadership. They define a CoP as a group of people "who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (p. 4). One could consider an entire school a CoP; there are many stakeholders who are passionate about educating students and work to improve their practice together to support student learning. Within that larger CoP, however, there may be groups or 'classes' of CoPs that are more focused on particular pursuits, such as CoPs aimed at the pursuit of improving instruction, or CoPs aimed at community engagement. For example, to improve student learning, different groups of teachers may be simultaneously working to improve instruction on proportional reasoning in fifth grade, implementing a classroom-based physical activity program for the school, and analyzing student data with the intent to improve instruction for English Language Learners. Although seemingly disparate, each of the teacher groups in this example could been considered to be within a class of CoPs focused on improving instruction. Thus, for each 'class' of CoPs, there is, as Wenger et al. (2002) describe, "a *domain* of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a *community* of people who care about this domain; and the shared *practice* that they are developing to be effective in their domain" (p. 27, emphasis original). As such, leadership by particular teachers in each of these groups would necessarily look different because the special combination of knowledge, community members, and practices is unique to each CoP.

Teacher leadership grows out of these CoPs as teachers come to belong to the CoP, build relationships within the CoP, and actively participate in the CoP's activities over time (Frick & Browne-Ferrigno, 2016; Crawford, Roberts, & Hickmann, 2010). However, this is not to say that TLs are only TLs within *one* CoP; likely they belong to several CoPs and could potentially hold leadership positions in many of those CoPs. Wenger (1998) discusses the concept of 'multimembership' in which people are more fully members in some CoPs and more peripheral in others, but nonetheless, they belong to several CoPs. In this way, TLs may develop repertoires of knowledge, beliefs, and actions that can transfer from CoP to CoP or participate in CoPs that expand their repertoires and support them to grow as leaders (Lee, 2017). We see the notion of CoPs as vital to the investigation of TLs because, as Klein et al. (2018) note, "[I]t is essential to understand teacher leadership as a series of interacting relationships taking place in linked contexts" (p. 109).

The Relationship Between Communities of Practice and Professional Identity
Building on Wenger's (1998) concept of multimembership to CoPs, Nyström (2009) notes that,

> All of these communities contribute to the construction of identity in one way or another. This means that the concept of identity always involves an experience of multimembership and a work of reconciliation, i.e. how to maintain one's identity across different communities of practice…. More likely, people participate in different communities where they choose to show different parts of their identities, behave differently and take on different perspectives as a way of coordinating their identity. (p. 4)

Thus, CoPs, can support the development of TL identities. This is not to say that personal characteristics are unimportant; there is acknowledgement that characteristics such as age, gender, and social class contribute to the formation of identity, as these factors always color how individuals move in the world (Nyström, 2009; Carlone & Johnson, 2007). Therefore, the formation of a professional identity – for example, the "kind of person" (Gee, 1999) who identifies as a TL within a professional education setting – has been described as the intersection "between personal resources, attitudes and values on the one hand, and work processes and settings on the other hand" (Kirpal, 2004, p. 201). This intersection allows for negotiation and integration over time such that the development of a professional identity is a lifelong (or at least career-long) endeavor (Nyström, 2008; Kirpal, 2004; Allen, 2016; Lieberman & Friedrich, 2010; Carver, 2016; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004)
Attending to Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral participation, in which members of a CoP begin their membership by participating minimally on the edges of the community, then apprenticing with members, and finally moving towards becoming a full member of the community, an individual's identity as it relates to the CoP becomes more solidified over time as members increase their participation in the CoP (Allen, 2016). Due to this gradual movement towards full membership in a CoP as well as the constant cognitive negotiations between the personal and professional spheres of one's life, Nyström (2009) suggests that novice professionals may have difficulty coordinating and creating a professional identity. In terms of TL identity, this novice type of identity could be seen in a teacher who may 'help out' from time to time, but does not take on leadership as a part of who they are. Perhaps at

the other end of the continuum, after years of working on a professional identity as a TL, individuals may come to see their identity as a 'stance', as described by Smulyan (2016) in her study on teacher leadership as "...a way of being a teacher…[that] is developed through a process of interaction with others who shared their questions, their concerns, and their commitments" (p. 16-17). Poekert et al. (2016) similarly describe a leadership stance in teachers as influencing, "every micro-interaction a teacher engages in throughout his/her day and suggests they believe their decisions and actions can and will powerfully impact their students, colleagues, school and broader community context" (p. 319).

The question then becomes, how does one move from a novice TL identity to a TL identity that is more aligned with the notion of a stance? Billett and Pavlova (2005) believe that the extent to which a person is successful in creating a rich, professional identity is dependent upon the fruitful integration of the personal and professional, or "the extent to which their work permits them to 'be themselves' and exercise their sense of self" (Nyström, 2009, p.4). In other words, the identity of a TL – however that may be enacted – must be authentic to who a person is to become a productive professional identity.

In the research at hand, our conceptualization of professional identity is aligned with Carlone and Johnson's (2007) identity model that encompasses the constructs of competences, recognition, and performances. These constructs work together as follows: "One cannot pull off being a particular kind of person (enacting a particular identity) unless one makes visible to (*performs for*) others one's *competence* in relevant practices, and, in response, others *recognize* one's performance as credible (p. 1190, emphasis original). Carlone and Johnson's model was originally created to examine science identity, and they provide the following example of their tripartite model:

> …a scientist presenting her work at a conference must use language according to prescribed norms, dress and interact in certain ways, and demonstrate that she thinks in certain ways for others to recognize her performance as appropriately ''science-like'' if she wants to be considered a scientist. The criteria for credibility shift depending upon context. For instance, performing and being recognized as a scientist is subject to different norms depending on whether one is in a lab with one's graduate students, at a dinner party with other professionals, or in a classroom as a guest speaker. (p. 1190)

Note that Carlone and Johnson highlight the attention to context, or a CoP in their model. As such, we recognized the need to locate the TL practice, and consequently identity authoring, in CoPs. We see Carlone and Johnson's identity constructs as they apply to the pursuits of TLs as follows:

- Competence - knowledge and understanding supportive of leadership pursuits
  (Ex. Understanding how the state testing system works)
- Performance - social performances of relevant teacher leadership practices
  (Ex. Leading professional development on testing data for the rest of the school)
- Recognition - recognized by oneself and recognized by others as a TL
  (Ex. "I see myself as a teacher leader for math," or, "I go to [teacher leader] when I need assistance with math instruction.")

Initial Teacher Leadership Model

In our recent work, we crafted a theory of teacher leadership related to identity (Carlone & Johnson, 2007) and rooted in CoPs (Lave & Wenger, 1991) with the goal of exploring how this theory might lend insight into teacher leadership (Campbell et al., in progress). These two theoretical lenses allowed us to move away from isolated lists of thing TLs do to locating TLs and their work within CoPs. Further, based on current literature, we laid out the structures that constrain or support TLs within different CoPs. This was followed by an empirical test of this theory to examine possible areas that need increased attention.

The work described here focuses on an interesting finding that arose from testing our theory of teacher leadership, the manifestation of what we are describing as 'thick' and 'thin' TL identities. The remainder of this paper focuses on this finding.

Methods

The initial study focused on determining the extent to which our *a priori* theory captured important features of teacher leadership and offered insights that may have gone unnoticed without this framework. The following methods will describe the data collection and analysis procedures employed for this initial study and then describe how the two cases presented in this research were selected.

Participants

Using multilevel modeling that accounted for school demographics (see Settlage, Butler, Wenner, Smetana, & McCoach [2015] for more details), we identified three urban elementary schools in New England that were performing better than expected on the fifth-grade state science test given their demographics. After identifying the schools, we contacted the principal of each school and asked him/her if they would be willing to participate in our study. We did not define for the principal what we saw as a 'teacher leader,' but rather asked the principal to identify two 'go-to' people in the school in an area of leadership the principal identified as central to their school's success. Table 1 provides more information about these participants and their schools.

Table 1
Participant School Demographics for 2015-2016 School Year

School	Identified Teacher Leaders	Location (NCES, 2015)	School characteristics (NCES, 2015)	Diversity Indicators (EdSight, n.d.)	% FRPL (EdSight, n.d)	State Assessment Percentile (from residual score; Settlage et al., 2015)
1	Drew – 8th grade science teacher	Mid-sized city	K-8, regular, Title I	31.9% Hispanic; 31.9% Black; 8.2 % ELL	100	91
	Sara – Special education teacher					
2	Frank – Physical education teacher	Mid-sized city	PK-11, regular-magnet, Title I	45.1% Hispanic; 23.7% Black; 6.8% ELL	82.0	91
	Leslie – STEM Coach					
3	Michele – 4th grade teacher	Small city	K-6, regular, Title I	50.3% Hispanic; 36.2% Black; 17.3% ELL	60.8	67
	Katherine – Art teacher					

Data Collection

At each school, we conducted one semi-structured interview (Roulston, 2010) each with the principals and the TLs. The interview protocols were developed to elicit details about the competences, performances, recognition, and the CoPs that afforded teacher leadership, as well as any structural influences (i.e., affordances or constraints) that pressed on the roles of TLs. Each of these interviews lasted approximately ninety-minutes and was audio recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Data Analysis

The analysis was completed in three stages and was derived from Groenewald's (2004) phase strategy for explicating data. In the first stage of our analysis, we examined the data to identify 'units of meaning' for the types of each construct identified within our teacher leadership theoretical framework (e.g., competence, performances, and recognition). This was also completed to identify the structural factors that influenced these constructs and the different CoPs within which teacher leadership was taking place. 'Units of meaning' were statements identified by the principals or TLs in the interview transcripts that were thought to reveal the constructs or locales of teacher leadership.

The second stage of our analysis involved clustering units of meaning, with care taken to ensure that clustering was sensitive to the CoPs within which these practices/structures were relevant. For example, we clustered the practices for one TL related to presenting professional development in their STEM Coach CoP while the practices related to planning staff schedules to work with various clubs fell into their After School CoP. In this stage, units of meaning were reviewed to elicit their essence within the context of the phenomenon (Groenewald, 2004), so that grouping the units of meaning could occur to form themes for each construct of our teacher leadership theoretical framework. The third stage of analysis involved the creation of a descriptive narrative for each of the TLs that revealed the patterns of interactions between the constructs of teacher leadership practice and how these were connected to the CoPs.

Selection of Cases

After data analysis, we noticed the pattern which we are calling thick and thin TL identities. As we considered our findings, particularly in terms of the second stage of analysis (clustering practices and structures into TLs' CoPs), we saw varying degrees of overlap – that is, components of identity that spanned multiple CoPs – amongst the teachers, which led us to consider whether one is a TL from time to time, or one who functions as a TL in multiple spaces.

To describe this finding in depth, we chose two extreme cases from the six teachers to focus on: Frank and Drew. We noticed that Frank had a number of competences, performances, and recognition components that seemed to span both of his CoPs in which he acted as a leader. At the other end of the spectrum, Drew identified only one CoP in which he acted as a leader, and the competences, performances, and recognition components appeared to be isolated to that CoP. Because these two TLs spanned the range from extreme overlap to extreme isolation in terms of identity components, they were selected to illustrate our thick and thin identity finding.

Findings

We present here findings from two of our case studies; one represents thick TL identity (Frank), while the other (Drew) represents a thin TL identity.

A Thick Teacher Leadership Professional Identity

Frank has been teaching physical education for 16 years. Frank's work demonstrated what we propose is a 'thick' identification as a TL centered around issues of social justice and equity. We identified two CoPs where Frank's TL work took place: his 'Teacher' CoP and his 'Committee Work' CoP. Within the Teacher CoP, Franks works in his own classroom and with others to support the success of his students through thoughtful lessons and classroom activities. Within the Committee Work CoP, we combine Frank's work as head of the school's Parent Engagement Committee as well as work with the district's Equity Committee.

When describing Frank's work, his principal noted that Frank was very much engaged in his teaching and committee work when the principal arrived at the school seven years earlier. He noted that Frank is a leader on committees and provides PD within and outside of the district, including at his own school. Frank also frequently hosts evening events for the school. To sum up Frank's work, the principal stated, "A leader grows something beyond themselves. They grow other people within a school, within a district, within whatever sphere they're in…Yes, he's growing other people." Frank noted that he came to be in his TL position because he was passionate about issues of equity and families; he described the transition to TL as, "all of the

sudden, you're doing things, and people are asking the questions." Frank was simply excited to do the work and was leading the way in making things happen around issues of equity and families.

Referring to the three components of identity (competences, performances, and recognition [Carlone & Johnson, 2007]) the following competences were identified in Frank's work: knowledge of pedagogy, excellent communication skills, cultural competence, and knowledge of the local community. Frank's knowledge of pedagogy resided predominantly in his Teacher CoP, while the other competences were seen to span both CoPs. Frank's principal summed up many of these competences by stating, "He gets that equity and cultural competence and understanding how important cultural competence is…He just has an ability to set aside how he personally is feeling and understand other people's points of view." In his work, Frank performed several actions related to teacher leadership that spanned both of his CoPs as well; these fall into two broad categories of professional development related to issues of equity, and leading by example. Finally, Frank was recognized by others as being a leader, as others listened to him, they had productive conversations together, they participated in his events, and they sought him out for assistance and expertise. He also recognized himself as a leader, describing his desire to go the extra mile: "I believe I'm a teacher leader. I know I'm a teacher leader…I feel like I…just don't want to do what is asked of me." Both the principal and Frank mentioned that he was passionate about leading others in terms of issues of equity and social justice. In this way, Frank acted as a TL for social justice nearly all of the time; he did not seem to have an identity that was separate from him leading the school in terms of supporting all students and families. This is what leads us to describe his TL identity as 'thick.'

A Thin Teacher Leadership Professional Identity

Drew has been an eighth-grade science teacher for 11 years. In contrast to Frank, Drew demonstrated what we propose was a 'thin' TL identity. Drew identified one CoP in which he acted as a leader, which we will call the 'Kindergarten' CoP. Drew is an eighth-grade science teacher, but was selected by his principal (based on his success as an eighth-grade science teacher and his availability with an extra preparation period) to assist kindergarten teachers in teaching science. Unlike Frank, Drew did not seem to describe a Teacher CoP in which he identified himself as a leader amongst his eighth-grade science teaching peers, but rather described his work as a science teacher in terms of his own, individual work.

When describing Drew and how he came to be in his TL role, his principal noted that he chose Drew to work with other teachers because he had only taught eighth-grade science and, "I felt like he needed to grow a little bit." However, the principal also noted that when he approached Drew with this idea, Drew was "a little reluctant." Over time, the principal saw Drew grow in his role, but it did indeed take time:

> I think it took [Drew] a year to get used to the idea that he was actually in charge of how much science they [kindergarten students] learned…The next year…he took more control of it…At first…I kind of led him through it. Now he does it on his own. I think he sees himself more as a leader now.

Drew describes his work somewhat differently in that when the school schedule changed three years ago, he had more planning periods and was asked to work with lower grades (first with sixth grade, and then kindergarten) on science. He spoke of this transition to being a TL as something he did willingly, as he sees the benefit of having the lower grades "on board with how to do science the way the NGSS [Next Generation Science Standards] is written." At this point, he plans lessons and then co-teaches with each of the three kindergarten teachers once a week, with Drew in the lead.

Competences identified for Drew in his CoP included knowledge of students, knowledge of pedagogy, knowledge of content (science), knowledge of teachers, and knowledge of the school. In terms of performances, behind the scenes, Drew scheduled one-to-one meetings with the kindergarten teachers, helped obtain necessary science supplies, and created curriculum documents. Publicly, Drew presented Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS Lead States, 2013) information to, planned/co-planned lessons with, and modeled science instructional methods for the kindergarten teachers. However, Drew's recognition as a TL was nebulous; he was widely recognized by his peers and administrators as being the 'go to' person for science, as illustrated here:

> They'll [Drew's peers] say, "I want to do a lab with my kids. I wonder if we have any microscopes. Oh, let me go ask Drew." They see him as a leader. They don't come to me [the principal] for that stuff. They'll go to him. They say, "Drew, do we have any microscopes? Do we have any magnifying glasses? Can you help me with how to set this lab up?"

However, Drew did not readily take on the title of TL, as 'naming' himself seemed somewhat egotistical to him:

> I mean, I don't think of myself as a leader, necessarily. I let other people make that call. If I'm called upon to share what I've learned, then fine, so be it…I always feel like you lead by example—by the walk, rather than the talk.

Drew also kept reminding us that he did not have an 'official' title as a science coach, making it difficult for him to label himself. Rather, Drew saw much of his work as a science teacher who was simply doing his assigned job to the best of his ability and helping others out. Drew did not take on a leadership stance, and saw leadership as an occasional task, rather than something that resided within him. This is what led us to describe Drew's TL identity as 'thin'.

Discussion

We chose to further delve into Frank and Drew's cases, as we were seeking to better understand the differences in how they led others, as well as in how they saw themselves in terms of teacher leadership. Sinha and Hanuscin (2017), in their work on TL identities, took the stance that teachers cannot be TLs unless they both engage in TL practices and identify themselves as a TL. By utilizing Carlone and Johnson's (2007) identity model which includes both internal and external recognition, we acknowledge the importance of one recognizing themselves as a TL while still validating the importance of others recognizing one as a TL. Therefore, while Sinha and Hanuscin (2017) have a valid perspective in how they define teacher leadership identity, we have chosen to use the terms 'thick identity' and 'thin identity' to provide further nuance to how we might describe TLs, since we see thick identity – that is, a TL identity that is deeply rooted in who the person is – as possibly more desirable than a thin TL identity, or a TL identity in which one might see themselves occasionally as a TL when they are called on to lead.

As described earlier, the formation of a professional identity is the weaving together of personal and work (Kirpal, 2004) and the extent to which one is successful in creating a professional identity is dependent upon the ability to 'be themselves' (Nyström, 2009) in their work. We saw Frank as having a successful, thick, professional TL identity because his passion for leading around issues of equity and social justice was deeply rooted in who he was. In other words, he did not turn this passion on and off for work purposes, or within particular CoPs, but carried this passion across all that he did, marrying his personal and work roles and responsibilities. Conversely, we saw Drew as having a novice, thin professional TL identity because, although he was passionate about science and knew his content well, he did not see leading others in science as a deeply rooted part of who he was. Perhaps this was because leading others is only a recent role, and – consistent with Nyström's (2009) description of identity development in novice professionals – Drew was having a difficult time coordinating his personal identity (in which humility appeared to be quite prominent) with his professional identity (in which others see him as an 'expert' or 'go-to' person). Another possibility is that Drew has not had time to reflect on his views of teacher leadership and align these views with his practices to further develop his TL identity (Sinha & Hauscin, 2018). Or a third possibility is that Drew's thin identity is due to his lack of strong multimembership (Wenger, 1998) in a variety of CoPs that might strengthen his TL repertoires. Weiner and Woulfin (2018) note that if TLs lack opportunities to act as leaders, they may not progress in their roles as TLs. Nonetheless, this thin identity meant that at this moment in Drew's career, teacher leadership was likely something that he could walk away from easily, and perhaps even something that he saw as a burden or 'extra responsibility' because leading was not a core part of who he believes he was.

Thus, contrasting thick and thin identity, we believe that TLs with thick TL identities may be more effective for leading a school. Rather than teacher leadership being a 'hat' that one wears from time to time, thick TL identity may allow a TL to maintain a unified vision for moving the school forward and to act as a consistent leader. On the other hand, a thin TL identity may lead teachers to compartmentalize their work, which has the potential to waste energy doing isolated work in fits and spurts, or advance competing agendas depending on the 'hat' that is worn in the moment. Particularly if we consider TLs as being those who might move educational reforms or ideas forward within schools (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008), consistency in leadership messages and actions is paramount in the change readiness of school colleagues (Weiner, 2009).

Implications and Conclusion

This research was part of a larger project focused on developing a theory of teacher leadership related to identity (Carlone & Johnson, 2007) and rooted in CoPs (Lave & Wenger, 1991). We felt this particular research was important to pursue because of the recognition of the variability that existed in the TL identification we observed and struggled to explain. As we further reviewed the literature related to teacher leadership, CoPs, and identity, across a range of conceptualizations (e.g., Fairman and Mackenzie, 2012; Muijs & Harris, 2007; Nyström, 2009; Poekert, et al., 2016; Wenger et al., 2002), we found that by stitching these frameworks together, our ways of thinking about the two case studies were enriched, as these frameworks provided possible explanations. Consequently, while this work has yet to yield a model of professional development that can support TL professional learning, we believe it, along with the work we have cited, is better positioned to provide the theoretical framework and guidance for such a foundation in the future. More specifically, this work has led us to ask questions about how and whether the various CoPs within which TLs found themselves were CoPs that supported and continued to support the TLs' intersecting personal resources, attitudes, and values (Kirpal, 2004) with necessary competences, performances, and recognition within locally, culturally, and historically structured settings (Carlone & Johnson, 2007) to 'thicken' TL identities.

In the end, we believe it may be productive to think about the classes or different types of CoPs within which TLs engage. As an example, we believe that TLs working to iteratively improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment may, based on future research, be identified as a class of CoPs that is important to better understand because of the centrality of this pursuit for TLs. Likewise, another example class or type of CoPs might be school leaders, including TLs, focused on increased community participation. Consequently, we believe that as we are able to identify the salient classes of CoPs and their pursuits within which TLs engage, we might then be able to (1) identify and make explicit theories about how teacher leadership can become a productive stance (thick identity) in the respective classes of CoP pursuits, (2) support and make explicit the codification of the explicated theory in the expertise and performances of TLs in practice, and (3) capture and aid in constructing the tools that support the codification, storage, and transmission of this class of CoP-specific articulated knowledge about teacher leadership (Glazer & Peurach, 2015). This approach of simultaneously focusing on theory, code, and tools for the development and refinement of knowledge about teacher leadership, we believe, has promise for serving as the focus of TL professional learning supports, while being iteratively refined to account for the uncertain and contingent nature of the spaces where TLs' work unfolds.

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