Teachers as Architects of Transformation:
The Change Process of an Elementary-School Teacher in a Practitioner Research Group

By Amy Vetter

> This process of meeting with you has opened me to a different side of teaching. I've taken on a leadership role at school and as a result they [teachers] see me differently because I'm presenting at conferences. I'm stepping out of the teacher box. It's opened my eyes to a lot of things that I wouldn't have seen before. This year my research taught me more about the people I teach with. I learned that I can't change the world. I can't even change 13 teachers. I can introduce it [writing strategies], support them, and then let it go. (Teacher research group meeting, March 2009)

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Lasting change in teacher practice is difficult because it expects that teachers challenge and reconstruct deeply embedded practices and beliefs (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Pennington, 2005). For Grace, a third-grade teacher, practitioner research with the Triad Teacher Researchers (TTR) provided a space for her to change beliefs and practices about being a teacher. As stated above, Grace said that the group helped her to step outside the teacher box and take on a leadership position in staff development about writing at her school. In the TTR group, she implemented a year-long study that examined how to execute homegrown (i.e., teacher driven) professional development. This new

position changed how she perceived her staff, how they perceived her, and writing instruction at her school.

As a member and facilitator of this practitioner researcher group, I was intrigued by Grace's change process as it related to both becoming a teacher leader and improving writing instruction. For Grace, the opportunity to be a teacher leader occurred when her principal approached her about leading staff development on writing instruction. Although passionate about writing and eager to share her new knowledge from an M.A. degree in literacy, Grace initially resisted the idea of situating herself as a leader because she was fearful of the consequences. She spent several practitioner researcher group meetings imagining and contemplating what that new position might mean for her. Specifically, she asked herself, "How will I behave differently? How will people perceive me differently?"

Despite her hesitancy, Grace viewed this new leadership position as a challenge to improve teaching and learning. Every year she and several other members of the group engaged in research projects that purposefully pushed them outside their "teacher box" and into unknown territories with the goal of student success. After working with teachers in this group, I wondered why educators approached current professional development from the perspective that teachers either needed to be changed or resisted change. Recently, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) proposed that practitioners must be central to the "goal of transforming teaching, learning, leading, and schooling" (p. 119). In order to situate practitioners in that way, educators must view teachers as change agents rather than passive entities who need to be transformed by other professionals. To do this, professional development should be a constructive and supportive space that fosters teachers' drive to improve learning and instruction. Much research has advocated for these spaces to be critical, supportive, and reflective (MacLean & Mohr, 1999; Zeichner, 2002). Less research, however, has examined teachers' change process to better understand what professional spaces foster teachers as they construct their own transformation. To address those issues, this qualitative study examined the following research question: What was the change process of one teacher researcher as she engaged in a year-long practitioner researcher group?

Related Literature

Teacher Change Research

Building on teacher education research that addresses teacher change I focus on three central theorists, Dewey, Schön, and Kegan, because of their focus on professional experience and critical reflection. In Dewey's (1991) philosophy of education and experience, he advocated for educators to engage in methods of intelligent action or teacher inquiry that began with a puzzling situation, led to a generation of questions and formulation of solutions, and ended with an evaluation of possible lines of action. His theory of experience in relation to education suggested that teachers

change their practice continually by engaging in experimental testing in the classroom. Such reflection promoted growth in both the teacher and students.

Schön (1983) developed theories about learning, change, and reflection that highlighted how reflection was central to understanding what practitioners do. His notions of reflection-in-action, and reflection-on-action involved an examination of experiences, connection to emotions, and attendance to theories in use and entailed building new understandings to inform actions in an unfolding situation. For Schön, teacher transformation occurred through reflection about personal experiences in the classroom that analyzed, adapted, and challenged assumptions. He believed that teachers were likely to assess, understand, and learn from experiences.

In Kegan's (1994) constructive developmental theory, he argued that as individuals mature they understand experiences in "more complex systems of mind" (p. 9). Change requires the desire to change, a shift in personal values, and transformation in the way individuals know. One of the difficulties of teacher change is that professional development not only expects that teachers take on new knowledge and skills but it also asks them "to change the whole way they understand themselves, their world, and the relationship between the two" (p. 275). Lasting change or "transformation" can occur when practitioners redefine and repostion viewpoints and affiliations.

These theories of change imply that teachers must acquire new knowledge and put that new knowledge into practice to promote learning in their classrooms. Although most staff development in schools relies on a top-down model of transformation, research shows that teacher change rarely happens through formal professional development in the form of a special course, workshop, or conference that takes place outside the classroom with an expert seeking to train teachers in a certain area (Feldman & Weiss, 2010; Garet et al., 2001; Parise & Spilaine, 2010). This occurs because teachers often resist change when the decision to transform comes from someone other than themselves. Richardson (1998) suggests that perspectives on teacher change are related to issues of power and status in that the "view of the teacher as reluctant to change… is promulgated by those who think they know what teachers should be doing in the classroom and are in a position to tell them what to do" (p. 1). Other barriers to teacher change include lack of support, time, funds, and materials, demands of high-stakes exams, and existing beliefs about teaching and learning (Anderson & Helms, 2001; Johnson, 2006).

Certain professional development methods, however, have proven to be successful at fostering teacher change. In particular, informal opportunities, such as teacher study groups or networks, committees, mentoring or internships are more likely to foster change because they are related to teachers' classroom contexts and involve active participation and collaboration between teachers that take place in schools or classrooms (Desimone et al., 2002; Richardson & Placier 2001). Teachers change practices when professional development is focused on content-areas and student learning gains (Desimone, et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001). Successful continuing education for practitioners must be ongoing and afford teachers time to practice what

they have learned and receive feedback on how well they are implementing what they have learned. For example, Levin & Rock (2003) found that change occurred through inner dialogue and through conversations with others. They advocated for professional development connected to teachers' practice with designated time for teachers to understand new ideas in relation to current beliefs and practices.

Bell and Gilbert (1996) posited that teachers must first critically reflect on their current practice and come to the realization that improvement is needed. Second, they need to become comfortable with trying innovative strategies and with collaborating with other teachers. Finally, they must come to terms with both benefits and constraints of changing practice, such as differing beliefs from colleagues. Such a process works best if supported by a collaborative and reflective group.

In a study about how one experienced math teacher changed her perspectives about teaching without planned professional development or researcher interventions, Chapman and Heater (2010) found that the change process is rooted in the tensions of classroom experience and practice. They used the phrase "architect of change" to describe how the teacher took ownership in her own transformation. Such change required ways of knowing for teachers in which they:

> . . . examine their own experience of work on themselves while addressing the question of how to support students in learning; attend to experience so as to develop sensitivities to others and to be awake to possibilities; focus on problems and experiment with situations; and engage in introspective and interspective observations. (p. 456)

Implications from the study suggest that teachers construct change for themselves and that prescribed interventions or professional development cannot guarantee opportunities for teachers to evolve if they are not invested. Chapman and Heater, like Kegan (1994), also recognize that teacher change requires foundational change or a shift in how teachers typically position themselves as teachers. For this paper, I use the phrase architect of transformation to highlight elements of practitioner agency and identity shifts that changed how teachers see themselves, their students, and the world around them (Chapman & Heater, 2010; Kegan, 1994).

Teacher Change and Positioning Theory

Maxine Greene (1981) suggested that learning to teach "is a process of identity development… it is about choosing yourself, making deeply personal choices about who you are and who you will become as a teacher" (p. 12). Wenger (1998) specifies that learning is an identity process in which people construct and negotiate identities in order to become members of particular communities, such as a teacher. Viewing learning in this way means that, "being" a teacher is a constant process of "reconstruction, reformation or erosion, addition or expansion" (Danielwitz, 2001, p. 10) in which members need constant support. Thus, teacher change is an identity process. When a person "changes" they can be understood as taking on a new identity.

In order for a person to construct a new identity, they must learn new behaviors and must practice them regularly in order to fulfill membership in the new group and be recognized as a member by others (Holland et al., 1998; Wenger, 1998).

Identities are dynamic and continually shaped by numerous interactions situated in social, cultural, and historical worlds (Holland et al. 1998; McCarthey & Moje 2002; Mishler 1999; Sarup 1996). Positionality is one way in which people enact their identities and it is central to identity work (Davies & Harré, 1990). Positioning theory suggests that educators can position themselves—reflective positioning—as leaders in their school by leading presentations or developing curriculum. Educators can also be positioned—interactive positioning—as a leader by their colleagues if, for instance, they were asked to present their research at a faculty meeting. These positions occur discursively and along storylines that are elicited through both personal experiences and larger cultural narratives (Davies & Harré 1990). Positionings reflect "daily relations of power and entitlement" within a particular context and illustrate how "multiple identities are constructed, enacted, and negotiated over time" (Holland et al., 1998). Holland et al. (1998) suggest that positional identities are:

> More or less conscious, more or less habitual, moving sometimes out of awareness, toward fossilization, and at other times toward consciousness and susceptibility to manipulation. (p. 237)

Sometimes a new position occurs spontaneously and does not occur again. Other times people purposefully position themselves in ways over and over in order to become a member of a particular community.

These positionings are not without difficulty and they take practice over time. For example, a teacher taking on the position of a leader must negotiate their time between teaching students and leading teachers or negotiate a new set of responsibilities such as test scores versus students' range of progress. Negotiations, such as these, can make change difficult. Scholars recognize that collaborative groups can provide support for taking on new positions and negotiating identities (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Holland et al., 1998; Wenger, 1998). For example, Holland et al. (1998) used the stories of alcoholics anonymous to illustrate how discursive practices reflect interactive and reflexive positionings of people and the process of constructing new identities. They suggested that telling stories objectifies beliefs about a new positional identity, provides a storyline for what it means to take on a new position, and becomes a "cultural vehicle for identity formation or for understanding life in" a new world (e.g., AA) (p. 71). Through this process of construction, the person gains a better understanding of how and why they are how they are. Clandinin et al. (2009) advocated for more opportunities for teachers to tell and retell their stories within collaborative groups to foster the construction of professional identities and the negotiation of administrative expectations. If teacher change is an identity process (Geijsel & Meijers, 2005), more research needs to

examine that identity process by studying how teachers position themselves and are positioned by others over time.

Practitioner Research

Practitioner researcher groups have been known to foster teacher change and identity work by developing groups that discuss personal experiences and tensions about teaching and learning (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004; MaClean & Mohr, 1999). Practitioner research is research implemented by practitioners (i.e., teachers, counselors, principals, etc.) in order to improve their practice (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). Such inquiry projects lead to change in professional confidence, awareness of classroom events, dispositions towards reflection, broadened views of teaching, teacher beliefs about themselves, their roles as teachers, and attitudes towards students (Goodnough, 2010; Zeichner, 2003).

Not all of these groups are successful, however. Research suggests that successful groups are more likely to engage in open communication that critically challenges instruction and practice and increases awareness of professional issues (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Lauer, 2001; Levin & Rock, 2003). Such groups foster change because they provide contexts in which practitioners share multiple perspectives, critique experiences, assumptions, and beliefs about teaching, revise and rethink educational norms, uncover values and interests, create opportunities for all learners, and identify areas of change for people (Capitelli, 2005; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Gilles et al., 2010; Watanabe, 2006). Zeichner (2002) found that in order for teachers to transform knowledge and practices they must be involved in a culture of inquiry that respects their voices and gives teachers control of the research process. He also found that collaboration must occur in a supportive context that challenges members intellectually and is invested over long periods of time.

An important element of teacher transformation in such groups is the kind of talk that members use to jointly construct knowledge and teacher identities (Fairbanks & LaGrone, 2006; Little, 2002, 2003). In their study on a practitioner research group, Fairbanks and LaGrone (2006) suggested that it was through exploratory talk that teachers were able to explore and question beliefs and construct and negotiate discourses related to community membership. In Cohen's (2008) study about how teachers negotiate professional identities as learners through talk, she found that professional dialogue led to the making of new meanings about teaching and challenged practitioners to step out of their comfort zone. Cohen drew from Cavazos and Members of WEST (2001) definition of dialogue as "a conversation directed toward discovery and new understanding, where the participants question, analyze, and critique the topic or experience" (p. 160). Cohen called this dialogue the "glue" of practitioner research in that it gave life to the inquiry, enhanced reflection, and deepened the professional community. Specifically, she found that personal storytelling and analytic talk were central to the identity work and change process of practitioners.

This literature views teacher change as a personal, reflective, and collaborative process that involves taking on new identity positions. To redefine professional development so that it facilitates teacher change, more research needs to examine the spaces that foster identity work in which teachers become architects of their own transformation.

The Study

This study draws upon case-study research methods and positioning theory to better understand Grace's (a fifth-grade teacher) change process in a practitioner research group for one year (Davies & Harré, 1999; Merriam, 2009). Findings illustrate not only how she transformed but also how members of the group positioned Grace in ways that helped her imagine, prepare, and enact new positions in other environments. By focusing on Grace, I was able to "discover, understand, and gain insight" from her experience and describe it in rich detail for other practitioners (Merriam, 2009, p. 77; Yin, 1994). Specifically, positioning theory was used to interpret artifacts, interviews, and group discussions (Davies & Harré, 1999). From that analysis, I found that Grace's story of change included the following interrelated process: Contemplating and imagining a new position, enacting and solidifying a new position, maintaining a new position in spite of resistance, and realizing the results of her new position.

Context

This study is part of a larger research project that began in October 2007 in a Teacher as Researcher Course at a university in the Southeast United States. After the course ended, three students (i.e., Grace, Melissa, and Holly) from the course volunteered to participate in a monthly practitioner researcher group that they later called The Triad Teacher Researchers. Gail, my graduate assistant, also attended the meetings. As White, middle-class females, we met monthly to discuss research questions, methods, and findings related to their classrooms. We mention our demographics to provide context for the study and to recognize that our race, class, gender, and sexuality shaped the content and process of our group meetings. Findings from this study can be used to inform other groups, but it is not meant to be representative of all teacher researcher groups. Each meeting began with members discussing their research projects and ended with other TTR business, such as conferences or papers. As the instructor and facilitator of this course and group, I situated myself as a participant researcher. I engaged in practitioner research and frequently talked about data collection, analysis, findings, and conclusions with the class and group.

Participants

Grace is in her fifth year of teaching first grade at a small parochial K-8 school. She also taught in a large public school for several years prior to her current position. I met Grace as she was finishing her graduate work in curriculum and instruction

with an emphasis in literacy. In graduate school, she enjoyed connecting with other teachers who shared a similar drive for learning. Grace's research first focused on writing conferences in her first grade classroom. During the second year, she examined the impact of a professional development workshop she led for teachers at her school about writing instruction. Grace typically felt comfortable with qualitative research and enjoyed writing narratives. Because her graduate work and teacher research focused on literacy, her perspectives on teaching writing evolved into a sophisticated understanding of what it meant to situate students as writers in a classroom. Her next step was to share this knowledge with her staff. She was chosen for this study because she was heavily involved in the TTR group and because she was extremely reflective about her research process. Other members of the group represented in these transcripts included Melissa, Holly, and Gail who were all graduate students at the university and practitioners in K-12 public schools and/or postsecondary education. I was the group facilitator and participant.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection for the larger project occurred over a period of three years. For this study I focused on the second year because I was curious about Grace's change process as she situated herself as a leader of staff development in writing instruction. To examine this process, I collected data from the TTR meetings from the following sources: (a) Ten audio-taped discussions of the monthly meetings; (b) three audio-taped group interviews; (c) a conference presentation in the form of a power point; (d) draft of a manuscript written about her second study; and (e) observations and field notes from the same ten monthly meetings.

Data analysis was ongoing and took place over several stages that resulted in the following four themes: contemplating and imagining new positions, enacting and solidifying a new position, maintaining a new position in spite of resistance, and realizing the results of her new position. Over several months, I read and reread the various artifacts, field notes, and transcripts that involved Grace. Extended notes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) included information about how Grace positioned herself as a leader and how she was positioned by her group members as a leader, thus fostering Grace's change process. I continually developed and revised interpretations of the data using constant comparative and grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Analysis of Grace's interactive and reflexive positionings provided a means to explore the process she took for fashioning herself in a new way. For example, in a conversation, Grace stated that she worried about "relying on other people" to engage in staff development. At this point, she positioned herself as a leader who did not trust her colleagues to be open minded about learning new writing strategies. These assumptions were based on past experiences in staff development in which more experienced teachers resisted learning innovative strategies. In return, Melissa said, "You might be surprised." I said, "I rely on people all the time and look what happened." Both of these statements pushed against Grace's fears of relying

on adult participants and positioned Grace as someone who might be surprised by the dedication of her participants, one of the foundations of homegrown staff development. Field notes reflecting interviews, observations and artifacts added more insight into these positionings and illustrated Grace's change process over time. After refining analysis and collapsing codes, I developed Table 1 to illustrate the four themes mentioned previously. All of these processes were shaped by the dynamics of the group members, which are discussed in each of the themes.

To verify and confirm interpretations of data, I triangulated data sources (i.e., field notes, interview transcripts, audio-taped group discussions, and artifacts). I

Table 1
Grace's Change Process

Change process	Description	Example
Contemplating and imagining new positions	In the initial PR transcripts Grace thoughtfully examined and created a vision for situating herself as a leader.	"My mission is to address what they need. The point of homegrown staff development is to put the power back in the teacher's hands. But how do I do that?"
Enacting and solidifying a new position	As the year progressed, Grace strengthened her vision and performed various leadership positions outside of the PR group.	"And so then at the end, I would like them to write a little bit more like more reflective. And I was trying to have them do a reflective piece at the end of each session."
Maintaining a new position in spite of resistance	As expected, Grace encountered resistance from her colleagues. During PR conversations, the group continued to position her as a leader and helped her find solutions to the opposition.	"I think it's just the group I'm working with, they aren't very conducive to research. Many have been teaching for several years. I didn't get back many surveys the first time."
Realizing the results of her new position	Towards the end of the year, Grace narrated her story of leadership at a conference and realized that her teachers did learn and implement new writing strategies that strengthened their school curriculum.	"Eleven out of the twelve surveys were returned, the highest participation rate of the whole year. Teachers favorably rated the impact of the monthly meetings on how they teach writing and the knowledge about what is being taught at each grade level had improved."

also checked interpretations with members of the group and debriefed with colleagues (Eisenhart & Howe 1992; Erickson 1986). Thick description of the experiences of this case study provided detailed episodes of Grace's change process by systematically taking note of how she positioned herself and was positioned by others in relation to a leader identity. What follows is the story of how Grace became an architect of her own transformation and how TTR supported her through that change process.

Findings

Contemplating and Imagining a New Position

Before Grace took on any new position related to leadership at her school, she first had to imagine the position and make it her own. Part of this contemplation and preparation included the development of a clear vision for the kind of leader she wanted to become. For Grace, leadership meant facilitating a homegrown staff development workshop as she described below in a group meeting:

> My mission is to address what they need. The point of homegrown staff development is to put the power back in the teacher's hands. But how do I do that? I will give an initial survey to address their needs; we will meet monthly.

Grace positioned herself as leader who addressed the needs of her teachers and facilitated (*put the power back*) rather than dictated. She opened with a clear vision about the kind of leader she wanted to become (*homegrown, address needs of teachers*), but she was uncertain about how to enact that identity in staff development, which was mandated by the principal. She brainstormed possible solutions with the group (*But how do I do that?)*.

As the group offered suggestions, Grace resisted and positioned her staff as unwilling to participate in professional development. Mel and Holly (both educators and members of TTR), however, positioned Grace as a homegrown staff leader by asking her questions that helped her to think about how she might enact this identity.

> *Holly*: Could you use online discussions about the article?
>
> *Grace*: My teachers would not do that.
>
> *Mel*: It could be helpful. They could have conversations about writing.
>
> *Grace*: No, my case studies might do something online. It's all about who I choose. I love where I teach but I'm not even sure if they are going to read the articles. This is my biggest concern… that I must rely on participation of others.
>
> *Holly*: Adult participation.
>
> *Grace*: I don't have control over their responses. I worry that it won't offer insight into my own classroom practice. I worry about where this will go next year.

In this episode, Grace positioned her colleagues as non-participants. Her research

group members attempted to position her as a leader by offering suggestions, but Grace resisted. After posing several problems, Holly suggested implementing online discussions about readings. Grace immediately resisted this suggestion by stating that her teachers would not participate in this because they would not feel comfortable with the technology and they would not take the time do to do it (as stated later). After Mel suggested a possible solution, Grace speculated the possibility and again posed a problem and expressed uncertainty about working with adults as participants. After Holly clarified (*adult participants*), Grace elaborated her concerns. She worried that the project was not worth it, indicating that she was unsure if she wanted to make this change from teacher to teacher leader.

Despite Grace's resistance, her research group challenged her to focus on the vision she created in earlier meetings.

> *Grace*: This is interesting to me but I worry about relying on other people.
>
> *Mel*: You might be surprised.
>
> *Holly:* So do you have a research question in the making?
>
> *Grace*: I don't really. It would be something like in what ways does homegrown professional development impact writing practices?
>
> *Holly*: That is a really interesting topic.
>
> *Mel*: You will learn a lot about yourself.
>
> *Vetter:* And you will learn about your teaching too.
>
> *Holly*: So your question might turn into or you might find out, how does leading homegrown professional development change you?
>
> *Grace*: That is where I'm going. I need to go this way. I need to focus on this.

At this point, we see Grace contemplating and imagining a new position as staff development leader by wondering if it was worth struggling with resistant participants that she has not yet encountered. Because of Grace's experience in former staff development workshops with her colleagues, she assumed that these teachers would push against innovative writing strategies. After this conversation, Holly asked if Grace would have any case studies for the project, and Grace replied with "not many," again indicating her fear that participants would resist. Mel followed Grace's statement with a validating comment about how one case study was a starting point. Although Grace reiterated her concern, both Mel and Vetter followed with more validating comments. Such validations positioned Grace as capable of taking on a position of leadership that would be successful despite opposition. In particular, these validations illustrated that group member's valued Grace's new imagined position and fostered the kind of leader that Grace wanted to be (homegrown) by reminding her that she needed to trust her participants and follow her vision. These validations promoted professional guidance and support for Grace's leadership and

shaped how she adopted leadership paradigms through membership in the "leader" community. Thus, her group members played a part in how she positioned herself within the storyline of what it meant to be a leader at her school.

Next, Holly asked a clarifying question about her research project that began the closure process to Grace's discussion. After Grace worded her question all three members validated the value and interest in the topic. Holly clarified the question by rewording it, and Grace ended the discussion by validating her own topic (*I need to go this way*). For Grace, part of the process of change was about imagining and contemplating this new position and narrating a vision to herself and group members to hold herself accountable. Holland et al. (1998) suggests that narratives help individuals take on new identity positions by signaling membership within a new community and by transforming the member's self understanding. Clandinin & Connelly (1995) indicate that storytelling is a reconstruction of experience. In other words, teachers make sense of classroom experiences in different and even evolving ways. Deliberately storying or restorying one's life can foster personal growth and the development of new positions or a new sense of self. Communities/groups play a part in shaping identities, especially as identities are being contemplated.

Grace's narration was an important part of imagining and contemplating a new position. By telling her story to the group, Grace expressed uncertainties, posed problems, and received suggestions and validations that helped her to enact this new position and begin the process of constructing change for herself. The group's feedback to Grace's narration promoted Grace's positionings by validating certain positions over others (i.e., homegrown leader). Through these conversations, Grace and her group members built a storyline for what it meant to lead professional development on writing in Grace's school. Such conversations that included the telling and retelling of stories/experiences, meant that Grace was able to create storylines that she could live out in practice (Clandinin et al., 2009). As suggested by Clandinin et al. (2009), practitioner researcher groups are inquiry spaces that are temporal, imaginative, playful, world traveling, multiple, contradictory, and storied. The dynamics of this group fostered a space of imagination in which Grace was able to imagine herself teaching innovative writing instruction to a group of her colleagues.

Enacting a New Position

As Grace became more comfortable with her imagined positioned, she was able to enact new positions at her school. In several transcripts, Grace described how she performed as leader within the monthly workshop meetings at her school. These enactments included mini-lessons on writing, facilitating discussion about strategies in practice, and fostering opportunities for teachers to develop curriculum that integrated and aligned these new teaching methods across grade levels. In February 2009, Grace reported to the group about the progress of her research

project, which illustrated her identity enactments. Grace began by summarizing some of her data, validating the purpose of the research, and asking for suggestions about how to engage in her research project.

> *Grace*: And most data I have is at the beginning of the survey. I have this halfway survey and then at the end I'll have the final survey. I do think this has something to offer. I do feel like this is going to help my staff; it's going to help. I'm learning a lot. I don't feel I'm just wasting my time.
>
> *Holly*: I think your idea about the words is good. That might even be more valuable than just numbers [for the survey] because my number 5 is going to be different from your number 5 because…
>
> *Vetter*: And maybe give them more in the next one to explain their answers.

In this episode, Grace positioned herself as a leader who has something to teach her staff about writing. She struggled, however, to figure out the best way to collect data about the staff development to see what and if her staff was learning. Holly and Vetter positioned Grace as a leader by validating the need for her surveys to include words rather than a number scale to provide more insight into staff perspectives. Thus, Grace was able to describe how she enacted her leader identity and her group members helped her to think about ways those enactments might need to be modified to help her better learn about the needs of her staff, the foundation of homegrown staff development. In the excerpt below, group members continued to offer suggestions and validations that fostered Grace's change process.

> *Holly*: Those words might be indicators of what they're learning about writing. You know? They might be even more specific towards the end. "I've learned how to do conferences." Are they the same surveys every time?
>
> *Grace*: Uh um. No, this was specific just because I was looking to see, "how is it going so far?" and "how have things changed thus far?" And so then at the end, I would like them to write a little bit more, like more reflective. And I was trying to have them do a reflective piece at the end of each session.
>
> *Vetter*: Is that working?
>
> *Grace*: They don't want to do that.
>
> *Vetter*: It would be interesting to do an exit slip on a sticky note. Ask them to describe one word or phrase that describes what…how they feel as a teacher writing at this point. They don't have to write but that's still reflective.
>
> *Holly*: You could look at those words each time and that could also help you look at the progression. "I feel confused." "I feel I had an 'aha' moment."

In this excerpt, Holly asked a clarifying question and made suggestions about Grace's leadership and research. Afterwards, Grace justified some of her decisions and posed a problem about motivating her teachers to complete reflections. Again,

Grace positioned her colleagues as resistors (*They don't want to do that)*. How Grace positioned her teachers impacted her own positioning. Specifically, she had difficulty positioning herself as a leader until she perceived her colleagues as accepting her leadership. Acceptance of her leadership came in response to Grace's ability to be sensitive to the needs of those being led. For Grace and her colleagues, it took the entire semester of monthly workshops for most people to become comfortable with Grace's new position as a leader.

For the rest of the conversation Vetter and Holly made suggestions about how to shorten the reflection so that it did not overwhelm her teachers but still enabled her to gather the information she needed to be a homegrown leader who pulled from the needs of her teachers to drive instruction. Thus, members of the group positioned Grace as a leader of homegrown staff development by suggesting, speculating, and validating ways in which Grace could put that position in to practice (*Maybe ask for a number but then explain; And then maybe you could compare*). Grace also positioned herself as leader by reporting how she has enacted this position and how she plans to do so in the future (*I was looking to see, "how is it going so far?" and "how have things changed thus far?").* Holland et al. (1998) stated, as people take on new positions, they are not only able to envision them, but also enact them outside of the supportive group. Clandinin et al. (2009) advocated for more spaces that enabled teachers to continually grow as they practiced new identities. This group helped Grace to enact her new positions and to develop agency within a context that was not always supportive of her new leader identities. The group did this by continuing to support Grace as she told and retold her story of leadership at school.

Maintaining a Leadership Position Despite Resistance

As Grace continued to enact her position as a teacher leader, she encountered some resistance by her colleagues, as anticipated. Below, the TTR group continued to situate Grace as a leader of homegrown professional development by actively listening to her stories of resistance, making personal connections, giving suggestions, and offering validations to help Grace maintain her position as a leader despite the opposition.

> *Grace*: I think it's just the group I'm working with, they aren't very conducive to research. Many have been teaching for several years. I didn't get back many surveys the first time.
>
> *Vetter*: I think that's interesting though in itself…
>
> *Grace*: Yeah, why aren't they connected?
>
> *Vetter*: And what does that say about professional development, and you really tried to take this approach where it was bottom up rather than top down.
>
> *Grace*: Exactly. It's only my second year at this school. Last year I was the new kid now they said, "Oh you have so much energy because you're new." I'm kind

> of seen as a spy. Almost like an administrator, because here I am trying to divvy out money and trying to plan who's going where and who's doing what and it's just a different way of viewing me now.
>
> *Holly*: I can feel you though because I think people don't get why I'm doing this. A friend of mine wants to start a book club on a book that I introduced her to last year, and we're waiting to ask other people because we don't want to stress anybody out. We mentioned it to one person and they said, "Why would you do that? Go talk about a book about teaching?"
>
> *Grace*: I'm just going to try and reach whomever I can reach. If I reach someone I'm doing good, and I won't worry about the get-me-downers because there are always going to be those in the group and if I can't get used to them now, then I'm not going to be successful, so I, not ignore them but focus on those who are interested and try to be available for them.

In this excerpt, Grace expressed a concern and posed a problem about the amount of surveys she had received. Grace's colleagues were veteran teachers and traditionally they resisted change because what they did had been successful. Frequently colleagues made comments about the purpose of Grace's M.A. in literacy and voiced their incomprehension of her desire to be part of a teacher researcher group that met outside of school. Vetter shared a new perspective (*bottom up rather than top down)* and validated Grace's research despite the resistance she encountered, thus validating her research as a leader. Next, Grace narrated a story with dialogue from her colleagues to illustrate the resistance she encountered. At this point, Grace positioned herself as ostracized from the teacher group. She seemed to believe that it was not possible to be accepted as a teacher and as a leader at the same time. Holly validated her thoughts with a personal story about her own attempt at creating a professional book club in her school. In a sense, Holly's story told Grace that this is a typical dilemma that leaders face, who can overcome the resistance. Grace followed with a statement that justified her new perspective as a leader—that she could not let the "get-me-downers" get her down. At this point, the group helped Grace to negotiate conflicting identities (i.e., spy vs. leader) by validating her thoughts and sharing new perspectives.

This kind of group work represents how mentorship in professional learning communities works to build teacher leaders who are able to make changes (e.g., introduce innovative writing instruction) within the context of their institution. The dynamics of a practitioner researcher group are an important part of the success of taking on a new identity for teachers. For this group, helping Grace to negotiate conflicting identities was a key component of mentorship. Afterwards, Grace stated that she wanted to continue to position herself as a leader despite the resistance because she believed that she might foster change in a few people. In other words, Grace had to modify how she situated herself as leader in order to persist through the resistance.

This is only one example out of four in which Grace considered stopping her research on staff development because of the resistance she encountered. However,

her group continued to remind her of her initial vision of a homegrown staff leader with a goal of improving writing in her department. For Grace, finding a way to prosper despite external resistance was an important part of maintaining her leadership position and transformation process.

Realizing the Results of Her New Position

In April 2009, Grace presented at a local conference about her research. It was after this presentation that she realized the results of her leadership. Narrating her story at the conference and in the practitioner researcher group helped Grace understand that teacher's beliefs and practices about writing were changing at her school. For example, Grace stated:

> I definitely think that this project, this research, has impacted our school. We did portfolios that we didn't do before. There are big implications that we didn't do before. We never used rubrics and now we are. I really feel it's impacted communication—surveys show that.

Because Grace was a part of this research group, she systematically documented the results of her new position as a leader. In a manuscript, she stated,

> Eleven out of the 12 surveys were returned, the highest participation rate of the whole year. Teachers favorably rated the impact of the monthly meetings on how they teach writing and the knowledge about what is being taught at each grade level had improved. "I have learned so much about how to teach writing at my grade level and what other teachers are doing in their classrooms to promote writing." A teacher also shared her frustration, "There are so many new ideas to use now, and I am not sure where to start."

In this paragraph, she positioned herself as a successful leader based on evidence from her teachers. She also positioned her teachers with more trust than she did at the beginning of the year. By writing and talking about her project, Grace was able to see the changes within her colleagues, which helped her to persist and understand that resistance was part of the change process for her staff as well. In *Immunity to Change*, Kegan and Lahey (2009) imply that resistance is a part of change. They suggest that resistance is not about laziness or weakness, but is oftentimes about self-protection. In other words, taking on a new positional identity indicates a shift in how a person position themselves, others, and how they are positioned by their colleagues. Resistance to such change is inevitable because it requires that individuals understand themselves and the world in a new way.

Grace also stated that in order for her to take on this new position, she had to realize that she could not change the world:

> People were resistant to change. Some said that the workshop had little impact. There will be some teachers like that at any school. Some will take the ideas and move and others will put it in a folder. I learned that I can't change the world. I can't even change 13 teachers. I can introduce it, support them, and then let it go.

For Grace, this homegrown professional development not only fostered a change in her, but also a change in her staff. In her PowerPoint, she stated that it improved communication, developed a portfolio system, aligned grade levels, implemented more technology, and helped them teach writing in better ways. Grace explained that she began with preconceived notions about teachers, but at the end she received positive responses and even though not everyone made grand changes, they were more open to ideas and progressed in some way. She said, "I had a fear of being successful and could not have made a difference by myself. This was a team effort." In the end, she stated, "As teachers we came together and made a difference in how we teach writing and how we view our selves as teachers of writing."

Grace situated herself as a leader who successfully took on a new position that promoted change within her school. Similar to Holland et al.'s (1998) and Clandinin et al.'s (2008) research, Grace narrated her new positioning which helped her to create a storyline for what it meant to be a leader. Likewise, the narration enabled her to realize the benefits of her leadership identities, come to terms with the constraints, and become the architect of her own transformation.

Summary of Findings for Table 2

In a conversation, Grace stated that she worried about "relying on other people" to engage in staff development. At this point, she positioned herself as a leader who did not trust her colleagues to be open minded about learning writing strategies. In return, Melissa said, "You might be surprised." I said, "I rely on people all the time and look what happened." Both of these statements pushed against Grace's fears of relying on adult participants and positioned Grace as someone who might be surprised by the dedication of her participants, one of the foundations of homegrown staff development.

Table 2
Reflective and Interactional Positionings of a Leadership Identity

Transcript	Reflective Positioning	Interactive Positioning
Grace: This is interesting to me but I worry about relying on other people.	Positions self as leader who does not trust participants to be open about learning new teaching strategies.	Positions teachers as closed to new ideas and the research process.
Melissa: You might be surprised.		Positioned Grace as capable of being a homegrown leader who trusts her participants.
Vetter: I rely on people all the time and look what happened		By sharing a similar story, Vetter positioned Grace as a leader who is capable of being a homegrown leader who trusts her participants.

Discussion and Implications

This study has several implications for professional development and teacher change. For Grace, change was a dynamic, interactive, and complex experience. Like Brea in Chapman and Heater's (2010) research, transformation was a "challenging journey to a desired but undefined destination…ridden with uncertainty" (p. 456). This story illustrates that Grace became the architect of her transformation through the following four interrelated processes. First, Grace contemplated and imagined a new position by stating a clear vision for the kind of teacher leader she wanted to become. Second, Grace enacted and solidified a new position by trying out behaviors related to her desired position. Third, Grace maintained this new position in spite of resistance by modifying her expectations. Finally, Grace realized the results and successes of her new position, which validated her new identities and motivated her to keep going. All of these processes occurred with the help of her practitioner researcher group, which validated, challenged, proposed possible solutions, and supported Grace. Grace's story suggests that teachers can become architects of their own transformation when engaged in spaces that allow for them to draw from meaningful experiences and safely work through tensions of self and practice.

This study contributes to research about teacher change by reconceptualizing teacher change as an identity process that is a dynamic, complex, and interactive practice. It recognizes that transformation is about a shift in both theory and practice (Chapman & Heater, 2010; Kegan,1994) and suggests that discursive practices within collaborative groups can foster interactive and reflective positionings that lead to transformation in beliefs and practices. Personal stories are a device in which a person takes on a new position (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Holland et al., 1998). The TTR group was a space in which Grace took on a new position through personal story and dialogic conversation that posed problems, suggested solutions, imagined scenarios, and validated ideas. In a sense, Grace undertook a transformation that required a new understanding of herself within the context of her school (i.e., leader and teacher), and she had to come to terms with those transformations. Thus, discussion within the group helped her objectify her beliefs about the kind of leader she wanted to become and the other members helped her to contemplate, enact, and maintain that position. Grace's dialogue in the group also helped her to create a storyline for what it meant to be a leader by discussing her vision, how to enact that vision, and the results of her new position. As a result, these group discussions became a vehicle for identity formation or for understanding life as a leader that she enacted outside the group. By viewing teacher change as identity work, professional development becomes something that teachers do for themselves rather than what is done to teachers.

The research group also challenged her to take on behaviors and provided support for those new positionings at future meetings. Thus, reporting on her research project in the group was an active process of identity construction in which she gained validation from her members. Her group members played an important

role in how Grace developed as a leader of writing instruction. Their assumptions about what it meant to lead shaped how Grace positioned herself as leader outside of the group. Not only did Grace have a group to depend on, but she had a group of teacher leaders who could mentor her through this shift and validate and/or question her assumptions based on their experiences as leaders. Teacher research groups, as other professional learning communities, can be spaces in which teachers develop into leaders that encourage school wide approach to pedagogy and continuously improve practices that benefit the changing needs of their students. By viewing teacher change as an identity process we can better understand how to provide a space in which such identity work can take place. Such a space requires members who position each other discursively in ways that help them foster that growth. Like Clandinin et al. (2009), Grace's story illuminated how important narration is for teacher change. The group was a set space for Grace to tell and retell her experiences as PD leader and her group members helped her to create a storyline for what it meant to teach writing instruction to teachers that pushed against expectations by her administration and staff and held fast to Grace's belief in innovative writing strategie and homegrown PD. This relates to research that recommends professional development groups must be a safe, collaborative space that supports and challenges members (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Zeichner, 2002). One recommendation for fostering such groups is to engage in analysis of transcribed group discussions. It would benefit practitioners to investigate how they positioned themselves in discussions, how others positioned them, and how they positioned people outside the group in order to critically reflect on their narrative inquiries.

Grace's story also suggests that groups must challenge members to create a vision for the kind of practitioners they want to be. Such an approach expects practitioners to engage in an inquiry of the self in which they explore new positionings. Fairbanks et al. (2010) suggested that teachers should "make their beliefs explicit, and therefore, available for conscious examination and action" (p. 3). Masterson suggested that such practices would help to "increase knowledge of teaching and of self" and perhaps develop "narratives and practices of agency" (Masterson, 2010, p. 216). In other words, narrating stories about new identities requires that teachers engage in a narrative inquiry that fosters teachers' process of becoming architects of transformation. Clandinin & Connelly (1995) also refer to imagination of teacher inquiry groups as we tell and retell stories to make sense of experiences in classrooms.

A second recommendation would be that, practitioners need the chance to enact these new positions and then bring those experiences back to the group who can hold them accountable, validate, and problem solve. Clandinin et al. (2009) ask about the importance of making spaces in which teachers can then act upon wht they figure out and learn from their dialogue and collaboration and peers. One of the benefits of these monthly group meetings is that as Grace was continually constructing her story to live by or her leader identities, she was able to return to her group, share her experiences, retell stories and as a result live by her story.

Like the two teachers in Blanchard et al.'s (2008) study, Grace, a graduate student in literacy, was primed for transformation in her understanding of what it meant to teach writing. Leading professional development was an extension of that transformation. Providing spaces in which teachers can constantly learn and develop can help them build on the knowledge and experiences from year to year. As a teacher researcher in this group for three years, I was able to see Grace's transformation. Time plays an important role in change. As researchers seeking to better understand a teacher's change process, that factor should be considered.

Third, groups need to be ready to help teachers maintain new identities in spite of resistance. This means supporting practitioners as they attend to tensions between themselves and their practice and validating their identity work so that they are able to accept the uncertainty that comes with transformation (Chapman & Heater, 2010). Resistance is part of change and this teacher researcher group helped Grace overcome that resistance by providing a safe space for her to try on new identities.

Finally, groups need to share their stories of transformation in local and national conferences. For all of the practitioner researchers in the group, including Grace, this step was vital in helping teachers realize that their transformations were worthwhile. Educators also need to illustrate more stories about teachers' process of change in order to provide more insight on how to develop spaces in which such identity work occurs. Overall, teacher change within collaborative practitioner groups needs to be voluntary and authentic. If "formally orchestrated," such groups become bureaucratic and contrived (Little, 1992; Richardson, 1994). With more opportunities to envision, enact, maintain, and realize a new identity through a supportive group teachers are more likely to become architects of transformation that positively shape learning and instruction for students.

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