PERSPECTIVES OF EMPOWERMENT: EXAMINING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES

ACROSS EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

by

ASHLEY SHAVER NYLIN

(Under the Direction of Katherine F. Thompson)

ABSTRACT

Since the late 1800s, schools, students, and teachers have been considered to be underperforming (Cremin, 1964). Near-constant school reform and improvement efforts since that time are negatively impacting teachers (Berliner & Glass, 2014; Popham, 2004; Varenne, 1998). As a result of these efforts, teachers are feeling burned out (Tsang & Liu, 2016, Uzun, 2018).

The purpose of this study was to investigate K-12 teacher perspectives of empowerment across contexts and the factors that influence those perspectives. Three research questions guided this study: (1) What are K-12 teachers' perspectives of their experiences as instructors in a summer learning program? (2) How do K-12 teachers compare their experiences in a summer learning program to their experiences during the academic year? (3) What factors influence teachers' perspectives of their experiences across contexts?

The experiences of eight teacher participants teaching in a summer learning program in June 2018 and the subsequent school year were captured across a series of semi-structured interviews and the collection of artifacts. A theoretical framework of

Dewey's experience guided the thematic analysis of this descriptive sociological multi-case study. Findings indicated (1) structures, (2) autonomy, and (3) relationships supersede context and influence teachers' perspectives of their empowerment. Suggestions to positively affect teacher perspectives of empowerment for teachers, school administrators, and district personnel are explained.

INDEX WORDS: School Context, Summer Learning, Teacher Agency, Teacher
                 Autonomy, Teacher Empowerment, Teacher Self-Efficacy

PERSPECTIVES OF EMPOWERMENT: EXAMINING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES

ACROSS EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

by

ASHLEY SHAVER NYLIN

B.S., Auburn University, 2006

M.Ed., University of Georgia, 2009

Ed.S., Piedmont University, 2013

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2021

PERSPECTIVES OF EMPOWERMENT: EXAMINING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES

ACROSS EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

by

ASHLEY SHAVER NYLIN

Major Professor:	Katherine F. Thompson
Committee:	Janna Dresden
	Sally J. Zepeda

Electronic Version Approved:

Ron Walcott
Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2021

DEDICATION

To my colleagues, who deserve to be empowered.

To my students, who deserve empowered teachers.

To my family, who made this possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"You are not the first to pass this way, nor shall you be the last"

Maelstrom, Walt Disney World

As I reflect on the journey of researching and writing this dissertation, on everything that brought me to where I am, I realize that I am not alone in this process. So many people have guided me along the way, and without them this endeavor would not have been possible.

First, my husband Benjamin – your love, your encouragement, your support, your everything – this would not have been possible without you. Some people say that figuratively, but I mean it literally. Thank you for taking on every weight you could bear to lighten my load; I know this process has been incredibly difficult for you, too. Thank you for sacrificing from day one and encouraging me to pursue my passion. I love you with every ounce of my being. Now, the fun begins!

My parents – my entire life you have encouraged me to continue to pursue education, even when you were uncertain what my future might be like when I said I wanted to be an educator. Thank you for your constant support, counsel, and flexibility across all things, as so much has been at the mercy of this program for so many years. Thank you for loving me unconditionally. I love you both so much.

Kathy – from my very first day on campus when I started your service-learning course and thus embarked on my path to become an educator, I knew you were my person. Thank you for always pushing me, guiding me, and helping me see my potential.

Thank you for your tolerance of my many shortcomings and for your consistent and practical optimism as I encountered roadblocks and detours. You are not only a brilliant scholar, but a phenomenal human, and this dissertation (and I) would not be what it is without you. I can never repay you, but I will try to pay it forward.

Janna – I am so grateful for the way you challenged my thinking throughout my studies and made me feel like your family simultaneously. The way I grew as a result of spending so much time with you, particularly each June, is not lost on me. Thank you for opening your home to me, for encouraging me to have fun while still thinking critically, and for loving me. Our evenings after camp were so special, and I am thankful for knowing you.

Dr. Z. – I still remember being so nervous the day we met for coffee. I appreciate your skill, your time, and your straightforward demeanor that always left me knowing where I stood and where I needed to be. Thank you for the weekend morning phone calls as we worked through edits. You are a phenomenal writer and I have learned so much from you. Thank you.

Melissa – my constant encourager, my grad school and conference bestie, you showed me this was possible, and you reminded me every step of the way. I love knowing I have a friend who completely understands this process. You knew the path, held the light for me when it was dark, and celebrated every small (and big!) moment. Thank you for challenging me to be my best and modeling "work hard, play hard" for me. I admire you so much.

Julie – you are my kindred spirit, the Diana (albeit far more sensible) to my Anne. Whenever I needed encouragement, you were right there. You read my mind and my

vi

needs, and I am so grateful four our friendship. Our visit at the conference in Birmingham and our beach trip last summer were both balm to my soul and everything I needed. I have always admired your selfless kindness. You are amazing and I love you.

Claire – you've seen me through everything, my true A1 since Day 1 – my sister from another mister. Thank you for being you, for imparting your words of wisdom, and for reminding me that very often, I am overreacting, and things aren't as bad as they seem. Your counsel in April 2018 changed my trajectory and I am so grateful. I love you!

Pat and Erica – Thank you for welcoming me to the OSE with open arms. Our team was part of a magical moment in time that I always look on fondly. I miss having those meetings on my schedule, our chats, and our fun at all the events and conferences. Thank you for supporting me then and today. I am a better person because I know both of you.

To my participants – thank you for not only sharing your stories, but for trusting me to share your stories. This was a labor of love and would not have been possible without you. Time is so precious, especially for educators. Thank you for giving me some of yours.

To my Pinckneyville crew – you all took me in and made me family. You supported me in ways that I haven't ever been supported by colleagues. Thank you for the check ins along the way. I am grateful to know each of you. Between your support of my graduate school work and our surviving the pandemic together, I will never forget you. Even though my time at Pinckneyville has ended, we will always be connected. Thank you.

To all my other family members, friends, colleagues, classmates, and some former students – your encouragement has fueled me! Calls, texts, cards – I am so grateful to each of you. When I started the #5amwritersclub I needed accountability, and you all showed up. So many of you have become check in partners, sending me messages of love and support time and time again. Some of you have become lifelong friends. Some of you are from the past just sending high fives. And some of you are beloved former students who are now telling me you are proud of me. This moment is full circle and I am overwhelmed with gratitude. Thank you for sending me your love and encouragement. We rise by lifting others. Thank you for lifting me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"I believe that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform" (Dewey, 1897, p. 16).

John Dewey is often referred to as the "father" of education by both theorists and practitioners (Roberts, 2005). In his writing, he highlighted the importance of experience as part of education, "Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking, or the intentional noting of connections; learning naturally results" (Dewey, 1916, p. 154). Dewey believed, according to Lagemann (1996), that teachers "should link the experiences children brought to school with the activities, relationships, and materials that could be marshaled in school to help them grow" (p. 172). A teacher's guidance was akin to a master carpenter's interpretation of architectural drawings; the plans needed an expert to execute them fully. "In Dewey's thoughts, teachers were indispensable guides and organizers of the educational process and the success of educational reform would depend on their effectiveness" (p. 172). Teachers are a vital component of schooling (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Lagemann, 1996).

In addition to linking experience with education, Dewey also linked education to school reform and claimed education was *the* fundamental reform method for social progress (Dewey, 1897). However, rather than using education to reform public schools, public schools in America have instead existed alongside a reform agenda – one in which

schools, and the teachers within them need to change, rather than act as agents of change themselves. As a result, in the late-1800s, long before public schools were governed by a national Department of Education, schools were critiqued and called to reform and improve through the means of progressive education (Cremin, 1964). However, with change came more restrictions on educators. Lagemann reminds the reader of Ella Flagg Young, a student of Dewey's from 1895-1904, who noted even then that "teachers in metropolitan centers like Chicago lost autonomy and status in palpable ways" because of bureaucracy and so-called professionalization that resulted from reform (1996, p. 173).

Unlike schools in other nations, which are referred to as "the best" and "leading," when schools are criticized, schools in America are often discussed as "failing," "second rate," or "underachieving" (Berliner & Glass, 2014; Popham, 2004; Varenne, 1998). Concerns include, but are not limited to, the achievement gap, the gap in test scores that exists between White students and Black Students, Latinx students, and recent immigrants (Ladson-Billings, 2006), and summer learning loss, the loss of math and reading skills during the summer months while school is not in session (Afterschool, 2010). As a result of this criticism, schools have faced increasing accountability measures because of school reform initiatives such as *No Child Left Behind Act* (US Department of Education [USDOE], 2002) through the years such as high-stakes testing and teacher evaluation (Darling-Hammond & Rothman, 2015).

Accountability measures stemming from efforts for reform have not resulted in dramatic changes in student, teacher, or school performance. Hess contended, "Wave upon wave of reformers have met with disappointment as they struggled to reconcile demands that they simultaneously 'change' and 'protect' public schooling. The default

response has been decades of frenzied tinkering" (2010, p. 1). This "tinkering" has been realized as one failed reform initiative after the next.

Criticism leading to reform agendas in schools is not a new idea. In 1892, Joseph Mayer Rice published a series in *The Forum* on schools and conveyed the message that, "Apparently all was not right with the nation's much vaunted schools" (Cremin, 1964, p. 3). Rice, a pediatrician, was tasked by *The Forum* to "render an objective assessment for the public" through a tour of 36 cities and discussions with 1200 teachers. Cremin (1964) wrote of Rice's report, "In city after city public apathy, political interference, corruption, and incompetence were conspiring to ruin the schools" (p. 4). The opinion that "all was not right" in American schools continued into the next century.

From the loss of the Space Race with the launch of *Sputnik*, to the Reagan-era publication of *A Nation at Risk*, to the more recent reform movements of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (USDOE, 2002) and the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (US Department of Education [USDOE], 2015), there is a message that students and teachers are underperforming (Close & Amrein-Beardsley, 2018; Hess, 2010; Pinar, 2012). According to Iancu et al., (2018), this underperformance can be directly related to teacher burnout and stress, as when teachers feel "burned out", their performance lags (p. 373). Teachers, sometimes described as soldiers on the frontlines of education, feel burned out (Rankin, 2018).

Burnout is the response to prolonged exposure to stressors (Maslach et al., 2001). The stressors directly related to teacher burnout are teaching specific, as opposed to general stressors from outside the job, one of which includes a lack of voice. When teachers lack voice, they either lack the opportunity to share their opinions with decision

makers or feel their opinions do not matter (Calvert, 2016; Zeichner, 2018). Other factors include a lack of support from superiors and a lack of autonomy and opportunities for professional development (Maslach et al., 2001). Similarly, there is a correlation between perceived supervisor support and teacher burnout (Uzun, 2018). These stressors directly impact teachers' perspectives of empowerment and may lead to burnout (Tsang & Liu, 2016).

As teachers have been viewed as underperforming, the concepts of teacher autonomy and empowerment have declined in presence in schools because of reform movements, such as *No Child Left Behind Act* (USDOE, 2002) and the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (USDOE, 2015), and the "demonization of teachers" (Pinar, 2012). The increased focus on testing and standardization implemented through these reform efforts "set unrealistic expectations for what most teachers will be able to do" (Hess, 2010, p. 29). For example, when discussing teacher burnout, Rankin (2018) claimed teachers "need to do 100 things simultaneously yet expertly, sacrifice their evenings and weekends to lesson planning and grading, and must nevertheless serve up an endless supply of joy and love" (p. 29). From this perspective, it seems nearly impossible for teachers to meet the public's expectations.

Pinar described testing and accountability measures as "autocracy, not pedagogy, a military drill, not intellectual engagement" (2012, p. 19). His account is not dissimilar from that of Rice in 1892, who reported a teacher in Chicago commanded her students, "Don't stop to think, tell me what you know!" (Cremin, 1964, p. 5). Hess extended Rice's observations as he described the state of school reform initiatives in 2010:

To do anything at all, state-operated schools must negotiate multiple layers of government and public bureaucracy, contend with competing constituencies, abide by extensive public sector regulations and process requirements, and negotiate the tendency to find least-common-denominator solutions to public disputes. The result: state-run schools tend toward a process-based, watery standardization which makes it difficult to establish strong values or disciplinary norms. (p. 165)

These process-based, standardized schools – whether state-operated or not – require a structure that may result in a lack of teacher empowerment as defined in the literature (Balyer et al., 2017; Bogler & Nir, 2012; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Short et al., 1994; Short & Rinehart, 1992; Stolk et al., 2016).

The concept of teacher empowerment includes factors such as the ability to make decisions in the classroom, the opportunity to direct one's professional growth, how that educator is viewed by others, feelings of self-efficacy, opportunities to exercise autonomy, and perceived impact on students (Balyer et al., 2017; Bogler & Nir, 2012; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Short et al., 1994; Short & Rinehart, 1992; Stolk et al., 2016). Similarly, Lightfoot (1986) highlighted the roles of autonomy, responsibility, choice, and authority in teacher empowerment. According to Stromquist (1995), when focusing on the empowerment of adults, one should target adult women, as their lives are rife with experiences of subordination, and it is up to their own transformations to break the "integrational reproduction of patriarchal authority" which is produced in a variety of institutions, including education (p. 14).

Exploring empowerment is important because, while Lightfoot (1986) warned of the overuse of the term, Pinar's (2012) view of education is one devoid of empowerment entirely. His work focused on how stakeholders actively disempowered teachers and referred to school reform as "school deform" (p. 40). The passing of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (USDOE, 2002) nearly 20 years ago contributed to the decline of teacher perspectives of empowerment. This decline should be addressed, as empowered teachers lead to empowered learners, and empowered learners correlate with successful learners (Balyer et al., 2017; Lightfoot, 1986). Additionally, studies showed that when teachers felt empowered, those teachers exhibited more confidence, became more innovative in their practices, and were also more likely to positively influence their colleagues (Trust, 2017). Teachers who were empowered were likely to be linked to students and schools showing positive outcomes (Balyer et al., 2017; Lightfoot, 1986).

This study sought to address a gap in the literature regarding the examination of teacher empowerment across contexts and broad factors that impact teacher empowerment. Specifically, it hoped to highlight the relationship, if any, between teachers' empowerment and their school contexts. The purpose of this study was to investigate K-12 teacher perspectives of empowerment across contexts and the factors that influence those perspectives.

The study used qualitative methods, specifically a multi-case study, to investigate teacher perspectives of empowerment. Semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and memoing were used to collect data. This study captured the perspectives of eight participants. Starting in June 2018, the study chronicled the experiences of the

participants through their time with a summer learning program, followed by several

subsequent months in their academic year classrooms.

Background of the Study

According to the Afterschool Alliance (2010), when students do not engage in

summer learning, they experience summer learning loss (p. 1). On average, students lose

two months of math skills. Low-income students lose an additional two months or more

of reading skills, while their middle-class peers may make gains. Additionally, "more

than half of the 9th grade achievement gap between lower and higher income youth can be

explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities" resulting in fewer low-

income youth graduating high school or entering college (p. 1).

Camp Ignite was a summer learning program that grew from the partnership

between the College of Education at Weagle University, a large research university in the

southeastern United States, and Magnolia County Public Schools (MCPS). The camp

took place during June of 2016, 2017, and 2018. It served rising Kindergarten-8th grade

students in Magnolia County, which has nearly three times the poverty rate as the state's

average (US Census Bureau, 2019).

The purpose of Camp Ignite was not only to help prevent or ameliorate summer

learning loss in its campers, but also to serve as a laboratory setting for university

instructors, preservice teachers, graduate students, and local K-12 educators to

experiment with innovative pedagogical practices in an environment devoid of the

pressures of standardized testing, promotion, and other measures typical in public

schools. The instructional staff was a blend of university faculty and students and MCPS

teachers. Informal discussions with instructional staff highlighted the freedom provided

to teachers in the Camp Ignite context, something teachers discussed as being limited in their academic year appointments. Teachers used the terms agency, autonomy, and empowerment to discuss their perspectives of experiences in both contexts.

At the time of the study, a review of available literature revealed a relationship between the related terms teacher agency, teacher autonomy, teacher self-efficacy, and teacher empowerment. The studies, which investigated the empowerment of teachers, did not discuss teacher perspectives of empowerment within a specific context or factors that influenced those perspectives. However, the review provided an operational definition of empowerment for the purpose of this study. Additionally, the review of literature, which, highlighted teacher agency, autonomy, and/or self-efficacy, found that all three phenomena must be experienced by a teacher if they are to feel empowered (Balyer et al., 2017; Bogler & Nir, 2012; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Short et al.,1994; Short & Rinehart, 1992; Stolk et al., 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Generally, schools, students, and teachers are considered to be underperforming, and efforts to reform and improve schools are negatively impacting teachers (Berliner & Glass, 2014; Popham, 2004; Varenne, 1998). Teachers are feeling burned out as a result of reform efforts and cite a lack of administrative support as a contributing factor to their burnout (Tsang & Liu, 2016, Uzun, 2018). Teacher perspectives of empowerment impact student empowerment and, ultimately, student achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate K-12 teacher perspectives of empowerment across contexts and the factors that influence those perspectives.

Specifically, the study examined K-12 teacher perspectives of empowerment as they related to their practices in the context of their involvement in a summer learning program and in the context of their work as classroom teachers during the academic school year. Additionally, this study sought to identify factors that influenced teacher perspectives of their empowerment across contexts.

The participants in the study included eight teachers who taught in K-12 classrooms during the 2017-2018 school year, held instructional roles in Camp Ignite during summer 2018, and taught in K-12 classrooms during the 2018-2019 school year. A qualitative multi-case study approach was used to collect data regarding participant perspectives and data was compared both within and across cases. Data collection methods included a series of interviews and the collection of artifacts such as journals, field notes, and memoing. Analysis of the data was thematic and produced codes, themes, and analytical concepts using both inductive and deductive processes. The multi-case study was framed using   experience as defined by Dewey (1938, 1916, 1897).

<p style="text-align:center">Research Questions</p>

The purpose of this study was to investigate K-12 teacher perspectives of empowerment across contexts and the factors that influence those perspectives. Specifically, the study examined K-12 teacher perspectives of empowerment as they related to their practices in the context of their involvement in a summer learning program and in the context of their work as classroom teachers during the academic school year. Additionally, this study sought to identify factors that influenced teacher perspectives of their empowerment across contexts. The guiding research questions were:

1. What are K-12 teachers' perspectives of their experiences as instructors in a summer learning program?

2. How do K-12 teachers compare their experiences as instructors in a summer learning program to their experiences during the academic year?

3. What factors influence teachers' perspectives of their experiences across contexts?

By encouraging participants to reflect on and discuss their perspectives of their experiences across contexts, this study uncovered common factors across contexts and cases that facilitated or undermined teacher perspectives of empowerment. Gleaning an understanding of common factors that supported or undermined teacher empowerment could impact the experiences of teachers in schools across the country, and by logical extension, the experiences of students, as well.

Framing the Study

Despite the power of the term, Lightfoot (1986) warned that empowerment is a term that is overused, and continued overuse may result in its meaning being lost. Medel-Añonuevo and Bochynek (1995) extended Lightfoot's thinking and noted:

Empowerment has become one of the most widely used developmental terms. Women's groups, non-governmental development organisations, activists, politicians, governments and international agencies refer to empowerment as one of their goals. Yet it is one of the least understood in how it is to be measured or observed. (p. 7)

Therefore, the term empowerment should be used judiciously and with an understanding of what it is and what it is not. Despite Medel-Añonuevo and Bochynek's (1995) claim as

to the difficulty of measuring empowerment, researchers have tried to measure

empowerment using a scale (Balyer et al., 2017; Bogler & Nir, 2012; Bogler & Somech,

2004; Short et al., 1994; Short & Rinehart, 1992; Stolk et al., 2016). Their use of a scale

attempted to quantify empowerment but did not capture the depth of teacher experience.

The quantitative measures of the scale failed to provide a detailed experience of the

teachers that could be obtained through interviewing. Therefore, guided by Dewey's

concept of experience, the researcher used qualitative methods to capture data in this

study.

Experience

Dewey (1916) reminded us that "the *measure* of the value of an experience lies in

the perception of relationships or continuities to which it leads up" (p. 140, emphasis in

original). Therefore, what an experience means to someone can only be measured,

defined, or detailed as a result of their perspective. Additionally, he stressed that

"education in order to accomplish its ends for both the individual learner and for society

must be based upon experience (1938, p.113). Understanding how teachers view their

empowerment across contexts is directly related to how teachers experience

empowerment across contexts.

To make meaning of the data collected, a researcher must work to understand the

experience of the participant. One way to make meaning and to glean understanding is to

ask participants to reflect on their experiences in both contexts. Dewey noted the

necessity of thought and reflection to process experiences, thus formulating perspectives.

Without reflection, no experience can have meaning (Dewey, 1916, p. 145). Making

meaning of teacher experiences in the classroom is inherent to the purpose of this study, so Dewey's concept of experience guided the study.

Overview of the Methods

This study investigated teacher perspectives of empowerment across contexts and identified factors that influenced teacher perspectives of empowerment both within and across contexts. Qualitative methods were used. Creswell (2013) noted that "qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in natural settings sensitive to people and places under study and analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes" (p. 44).

Participants were identified using criterion-based selection (Roulston, 2010). Data collection focused on open-ended data points, thematic analysis, and interpretation of the findings from the data set regarding teacher perspectives of empowerment and influencing factors of teacher perspectives of empowerment as identified by participants (Patton, 2015).

To capture accurately teacher perspectives of empowerment and factors influencing teacher perspectives, a multi-case study method was used (Yin, 2015). A case study, according to Gerring (2004), is "an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units, where a unit is a bounded phenomenon" (p. 342). In the instance of this study, the contexts of camp and school provide those bounds. Yin (2003) stated, "You would use the case study method because you deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions – believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study" (p. 13). Flyvbjerg (2006) also advocated for the case study approach for context-dependent studies and noted, "Context-dependent

knowledge and experience are at the very heart of expert activity. Such knowledge and expertise also lie at the center of the case study as a research and teaching method" (p.222). A multi-case study method was used for this study because it sought to investigate the impact of contextual factors on teachers' perspectives.

Participants were identified for eligibility with the assistance of university professors and personal contacts. Inclusion criteria was discussed with Weagle University professors involved in Camp Ignite, and professors provided a list of their students who fit the criteria. Using that list, the participants were recruited via email. Fourteen potential participants were recruited for the study and 10 expressed interest in participating. After aligning schedules, eight participants were available for the study.

Semi-structured interviews and document analysis were used to construct a case around each participant. Participants were interviewed two times: once during or shortly after the conclusion of Camp Ignite and again during late fall of the school year. Between the two interviews, participants were asked to keep a journal to record situations in which they felt particularly empowered or disempowered. During the interviews, interview guides facilitated data collection. An iterative process was used to formulate the second interview guide based on data from the journals and the first series of interviews.

The interview guides were edited and refined using Castillo-Montoya's (2016) interview protocol refinement (IPR) framework. The IPR framework consists of four phases of refinement: aligning interview questions with research questions, constructing an inquiry-based conversation, receiving feedback on protocols, and piloting the protocol. Castillo-Montoya emphasized that not all phases of the protocol may be possible to

complete and noted the flexibility of the protocol for engaging in qualitative research. The first three phases were executed for both initial and follow-up interview protocols.

Data was analyzed through coding and sorting to identify themes. Within-case and across-case analyses were completed (Ayers et al., 2003). Coding was completed both inductively and deductively and was then used to build themes (Galman, 2016). Those themes were ultimately extended to create analytical concepts (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Significance of the Study

A timely, relevant study regarding teacher perspectives of empowerment is important for the field to inform future reform movements. The results of this study could drive decisions as to how administrators interact with teachers and how teachers and students are evaluated. This study examined the perspectives teachers held regarding their own empowerment across contexts and identified factors that influenced those perspectives. In 1986, Lightfoot wrote that "schools were viewed as good for students when they were educative and nurturant environments for teachers" (p. 22). This study identified the factors that acted as barriers and supports for these 'nurturant environments.'

Researchers can now engage in studies to both broaden and deepen this understanding, and ultimately share these factors with education stakeholders such as classroom teachers, building and district level leadership as well as state and national school leaders. Local, district, state, and national education leadership understanding of the impact of empowered teachers on schools and their students could lead to a shift in education policy. A shift in policy toward empowering teachers could improve the

experience all stakeholders have in schools, thereby improving the quality of life of teachers, students, families, and communities.

Assumptions

To engage in qualitative research, one must recognize certain assumptions. "Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful and knowable and can be made explicit," (Patton, 2015, p. 426). Throughout the course of the study there were other assumptions as well. It was assumed that most participants had a general understanding of what it meant to be empowered. It was also assumed that participants had opinions about their work experiences that they wished to share. Additionally, all participants were assumed to be engaging with the study willingly and not out of any obligation because of their shared connection to Camp Ignite with other participants and the researcher. Finally, it was assumed that participants were honest in their accounts of their experiences across interviews and journals, as there was no reward for participation or for the content shared during data collection.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as they were used within the context of the study. Definitions are provided to enhance clarity of their use for the reader.

Agency – For the purpose of the study, *teacher agency* is defined as being either personal or collective (Bandura, 2006) but requires one to possess a sense of purpose and a belief they can exert influence (King & Nomikou, 2018; Lasky, 2005; Pantic, 2017). When enacting agency, one uses available resources to take risks or actions with the support of relationships and requires continued reflection (Bandura, 2006; Biesta et al.,

2017; Pantic, 2017; Hökkä et al., 2017; van der Heijden et al., 2015). These processes are iterative (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Frost, 2006).

Autonomy – For the purpose of the study, *teacher autonomy* is defined as the opportunity to exercise decision-making or change-making abilities, contingent upon increased responsibility, accountability, and overall professionalism (Biesta et al., 2015; Honig & Rainey, 2012; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Little, 1995; Pearson & Moomaw, 2006; Rosalba Cárdenas, 2006. Shalem et al., 2018; Short, 1994).

Self-Efficacy – For the purpose of the study, *teacher self-efficacy* is defined as a teacher's feelings of being influential and possessing the ability to complete his or her job successfully (Bandura, 1997; Cantrell & Callaway, 2008; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Glackin & Hohenstein, 2018; Glackin, 2016; Klassen & Durksen, 2014; Perera, et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Short, 1994; Somech & Drack-Zahavy, 2000). These feelings are multidimensional (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007) and can be impacted by experiences (Del Grecco et al., 2018).

Empowerment – For the purpose of the study, *teacher empowerment* is a connecting term that focuses on the conditions of teacher roles through the perspective of the teachers. To be empowered, teachers need the opportunity to enact agency, to have some degree of autonomy, and believe they are effective educators. The potential for empowerment exists in contexts where those in power not only allow these conditions to exist but also encourage teachers to take advantage of these conditions (Bogler & Nir, 2012; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Lightfoot, 1986; Short 1994; Short et al., 1994; Short & Rinehart, 1992).

16

Local school classroom – For the purpose of this study, the term *local school classroom* refers to the teacher's full-time job and placement during the 2018-2019 school year.

Teacher – For the purpose of this study, the term *teacher* refers to someone working in the capacity of teacher during the school year. This person could be a homeroom teacher, someone who teaches elective courses, or a media specialist as long as they hold an instructional role and a teaching certificate. All teachers in this study were teachers during the 2017-2018 school year, participated in Camp Ignite in 2018, and were teachers in the 2018-2019 school year.

Summer learning program – For the purpose of this study, a *summer learning program* is a full-day, multi-week program taking place when school is not in session, designed to ameliorate or mitigate summer slide – also known as summer learning loss. It has a camp atmosphere with a focus on academics and creativity for students while creating an opportunity and a space for adults in instructional roles to implement innovative pedagogical practices with student campers (N. English, personal communication, November 13, 2018).

Limitations of the Study

As this study is qualitative and was not conducted in a lab, there were limitations that may have constrained the study. The population of potential participants was limited, as all participants must have been involved in Camp Ignite during summer 2018 and must also have been regular school year teachers during 2018-2019. Many Camp Ignite instructors were teacher candidates, and therefore, did not qualify for participation in the proposed study, thus limiting the pool of potential participants.

The multi-case study included eight single-participant cases. Some of the potential participants did not respond to recruitment emails. Of the original 10 interested potential participants, only a portion were able to participate fully in the study, which provided a complete data set of two interviews and a journal entry.

Because the camp context was one that was not only small, but one where many people saw and knew each other, another limitation was the ability to keep the identities of each participant private and confidential. Initial interviews took place on-site at camp or in the hometowns of participants. There was potential for other participants in the study and non-participants to identify those participating in the study simply by being present in the same spaces. Camp was allocated to one wing of a school building, and the community was small. While efforts were made to remove identifying information from the finalized dissertation, complete anonymity could not be guaranteed. Participants were promised all efforts would be made to protect their identities as some of the perspectives shared reflected negatively on certain contexts.

Finally, due to the researcher's role in Camp Ignite, it is possible that the familiarity some participants had with the researcher may have skewed what was shared. This skew may have impacted the data quality and subsequent analysis.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 began with an introduction to the proposed study, description of the background of the study, along with the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, followed by the research questions to be addressed. Additionally, the first chapter addressed the conceptual framework, an overview of the methods to be used, and the significance of the potential study. The

chapter closed with assumptions made in the study, as well as the definitions of key terms and the limitations of the study.

The second chapter presents a review of the related literature, focusing on teacher agency, autonomy, self-efficacy, and empowerment, as well as the relationships between these terms. Chapter 3 discusses the methods for data collection and analysis. The fourth chapter presents the findings of the multi-case study, and Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the study. The fifth chapter concludes with implications of the study and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents the review of related literature in which this study was grounded. The review discusses the terms *agency, autonomy, self-efficacy,* and *empowerment* as used in the literature and provides a working definition for each term as it was applied in the study. Additionally, the review highlights research methods used across the studies within and seeks to identify gaps in the literature. This chapter begins with the history of and an overview of the selection of the terms. Next, the chapter will analyze what the literature and research report around each construct as defined in this chapter, as well as explicate the types of research employed. The chapter will discuss the methods used, the participants, and the conclusions offered by the researchers. At the conclusion of each section, there will be a figure to summarize the content of the section, as well as antecedents and consequences for each term. The studies supporting the definition of each term are presented in appendices. The chapter will conclude with a figure depicting the relationships between the terms, and a summary of the chapter.

The purpose of this study was to investigate K-12 teacher perspectives of empowerment across contexts and the factors that influence those perspectives. Specifically, the study examined K-12 teacher perspectives of empowerment as they related to their practices in the context of their involvement in a summer learning program and in the context of their work as classroom teachers during the academic

school year. Additionally, this study sought to identify factors that influenced teacher perspectives of their empowerment across contexts. The guiding research questions were:

1. What are K-12 teachers' perspectives of their experiences as instructors in a summer learning program?

2. How do K-12 teachers compare their experiences as instructors in a summer learning program to their experiences during the academic year?

3. What factors influence teachers' perspectives of their experiences across contexts?

By encouraging participants to reflect on and discuss their perspectives of their empowerment across contexts, this study uncovered common factors across contexts and cases that facilitated or undermined teacher empowerment. Gleaning an understanding of common factors that supported or undermined teacher empowerment could impact the experiences of teachers in schools, and as a result, the experiences of students.

History of Teacher Empowerment

Schools and schooling in the United States have been targets of criticism for well over a century (Cremin, 1964). This criticism created a space for a variety of attempts to reform schools, with recent reform movements such as the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2002* (USDOE, 2002) and the *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015* (USDOE, 2015). Some reform efforts have left teachers feeling demonized and unable to meet the expectations of the public (Pinar, 2012). Additionally, efforts have sometimes resulted in teachers feeling disempowered and unable to make decisions that impact their efficacy (Berliner & Glass, 2014; Popham, 2004; Varenne, 1998).

Issues of empowerment have existed for a significant period of time, too. In the latter part of the 1800s, as "teaching shifted from men's to women's work" so shifted the makeup of educational leadership. As more women were either appointed or elected to leadership positions such as principalships and superintendencies, the desire to disempower female education leaders increased. Blount (2018) writes:

> A multifaceted backlash movement emerged to rein in women's advancements. A tightly organized national network of male educators sought to centralize power, standardize and mechanize practices, and otherwise push women out of leadership positions while simultaneously making teaching an increasingly servile profession. (p. 175)

Ella Flagg Young, as one of the first female principals, one of the first female superintendents, one of the first female professors, and the first female to be elected president of the National Education Association (NEA), was a champion for teachers, women, and their empowerment (Blount, 2018).

Selection of Terms

According to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) Teacher Preparation Task Force (2017), "the P-12 teaching profession is being asked to do more with less, confronting growing expectations coupled with declining autonomy for teachers, low pay, constrained budgets, and acute teacher shortages in certain regions and subject areas" (p. 2). In a recent survey the task force conducted, responses indicated the lack of autonomy for teachers. In fact, over 80 percent of the respondents to the survey agreed that teachers lacked autonomy. Additionally, this lack of autonomy was recognized by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher

Education Clinical Practice Commission in its 2018 report, in which they connected a decrease in autonomy to a decrease in job satisfaction, and subsequently, fewer teacher candidates entering the field.

The term *autonomy,* as discussed in the AASCU report, was highlighted during discussions among teachers at Camp Ignite in June 2017. Camp Ignite was a summer learning program that developed from the partnership between a College of Education of Weagle University, a large research university in the southeastern United States and its surrounding school district, Magnolia County Public Schools (MCPS). Camp Ignite took place each June from 2016 to 2018. The researcher gained access to the camp and its faculty each summer through her work as a graduate assistant supporting the camp.

To gain a better understanding of and to provide limits to the terms *agency, autonomy, self-efficacy,* and *empowerment*, the following chapter will define these terms based on the literature and research. Additionally, the chapter will analyze what the research and literature report related to these constructs as defined in this space. For the research studies, this chapter will explicate the types of research employed, as well as discuss the methods used, the participants, and conclusions the researchers offer. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a figure depicting the relationship between all four terms and a summary of the chapter.

Agency

The following section will define agency and discuss studies about agency. It will discuss themes present in the literature reviewed followed by a diagram showing the overlap present in the literature thus illustrating agency. It will conclude with a summary of the section.

Defining Agency

Agency can be conceived of in a variety of ways, and those conceptions are context-specific. Through this review of the literature, broad and narrow ways to define agency were uncovered. Agency in the literature is defined through the following lenses: human agency, being a change agent, reflections and relationships, and professional development and growth.

Human agency. Beginning broadly, Bandura (2006) discusses human agency in his work. He wrote, "to be an agent is to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances… People are self-organizing, proactive, self-regulating, and self-reflecting… They are contributors to their life circumstances, not just products of them" (p. 164). Additionally, he identified four core properties of agency: intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness. This definition is extended by Lasky (2005), who recognized that agency begins with the *belief* that humans have the ability to exert such influence. Similarly, Frost (2006) discussed agency broadly rather than focusing on teacher agency and noted that agency is not something one possesses, but is instead a capacity one constantly must try to achieve.

Being a change agent. Some of the literature took the task of defining agency literally, where participants in research or subjects of essays were acting as agents of change. Fu and Clarke (2017) drew on the work of Bandura (2006) by expressing the need to focus on agency in teacher preparation programs. Specifically, Fu and Clarke (2017) asserted that for teachers to be agents of change in their schools, their teacher preparation programs needed to be designed to create new teachers as agents of change, making the responsibility that of teacher educators. Allen (2018), as well as van der

Heijden et al. (2015) linked being a change agent to one's teacher identity. The work of van der Heijden et al. provided us with a list of characteristics embodied by teachers who are change agents: being a lifelong learner, a skilled teacher in both content and pedagogy, an entrepreneur who takes risks, and one who collaborates with others.

Reflections and relationships. Some literature about agency discusses that agency is a reflective construct that relies on the relationships between environmental factors. In addition to Bandura (2006), one of the most cited works regarding agency is that of Emirbayer and Mische (1998). They contended that agency is:

> The temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments – the temporal-relational contests of action – which through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations. (p. 970)

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) recognized that agency is contextual, and the ability to exercise agency is a reflective process and dependent on the interaction of and relationships between environmental factors. In addition, they identified three dimensions of agency: the iterational, the projective, and the practical evaluative. Pantic (2017) also focused on the power of reflection as it relates to agency. She noted that teachers can be agentic when reflecting on their relationships with students, as Pantic found relationship-building to be the most important action for teachers exercising agency for social justice.

Similar to Emirbayer and Mische (1998), Biesta et al. (2015, 2017) also described agency as a temporal and relational phenomenon and noted that "It occurs over time and is about the relations between actors and the environments in and through which they act"

(2017, p. 40). Like those who view agency through the lens of change agent, Biesta et al. (2015) linked teacher agency to teacher identity, noting that enacting agency is highly dependent on the personal qualities each individual teacher brings with them, such as beliefs, values, professional knowledge, and skills.

Professional development and growth. More of the literature related to agency, specifically teacher agency, is connected to professional development or professional growth. Calvert (2016) clearly and concisely situated teacher agency within the context of professional learning and asserted that within that context, "Teacher agency *is the capacity of teachers to act purposefully and constructively to direct their professional growth and contribute to the growth of their colleagues*" (p. 4, emphasis in original). Calvert asserted that rather than teacher agency being a program that can be implemented, it is a *shift* in not only the roles and responsibilities of teachers but also in their relationships with their colleagues, including their administrators.

King and Nomikou (2018), somewhat contrary to the work of Calvert (2016), investigated how teachers exercised or developed agentic behaviors within the context of professional learning implementation as opposed to Calvert's definition of agency being a capacity to direct professional learning. King and Nomikou (2018) emphasized the importance of reflection to envision change and noted that agency was driven by the culture of the school and the relationships between the structures and actors in that space.

Tao and Gao (2017) linked teacher agency to teacher identity and professional development and clearly defined professional development, at least in their context, as something done *for* teachers rather than *to* teachers. To that end, as teachers are able to be agentic in selecting appropriate professional learning opportunities for their needs—

because of self-reflection, teachers can "enact agency through making *choices* about what to engage in and taking *action* with different degrees of engagement to shape their own professional trajectory" (p. 348, emphasis in original). Similarly, Hökkä et al. (2017) also related agency to teacher identity, but more significantly, provided a definition for collective agency, where it was professional communities that were exerting influence and making choices to shape their professional identities. This influence and choice is reflective of the action associated with agency, as agency must be enacted rather than possessed (Biesta et al., 2015). Action, though, may simply be a choice to think such as in critical reflection.

Critical reflection, according to Freire (2000), *is* action. He reminds us, "Those who through reflection perceive the infeasibility or inappropriateness of one or another form of action (which should accordingly be postponed or substituted) cannot thereby be accused of inaction. Critical reflection is also action" (p. 128). Critical reflection and action that were visible to an observer were addressed by Philpott and Oates (2017), who relied heavily on the definition provided by Emirbayer and Mische (1998), by suggesting action research and increased time for collaboration as opportunities for teachers to reflect together to exercise agency.

Because agency is exercised and not something one can possess, it is an iterative process that continues (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Frost, 2006). To exercise agency, one must possess a sense of purpose and a belief they can exert influence through that purpose (King & Nomikou, 2018; Lasky, 2005; Pantic, 2017). One must also gather resources and take action or risks, supported by relationship development (Pantic, 2017; Hökkä et al., 2017; van der Heijden et al., 2015).

Studies about Agency

Within the literature reviewed regarding agency, there were nine studies focused on teacher agency. Of these nine, six used qualitative methods, and three used mixed methods for their research. Two of the three mixed methods studies read as qualitative studies. The studies can be categorized in one of two ways: as investigating the development or perspective of achievement of agency or as investigating teacher perspectives of agency. Most studies had 10 or fewer participants, with the exception of one mixed-methods study, which included 59 survey responses but only four interviews. Most participants were current teachers, but a few administrators and external experts were also included.

Development of agency. The works of Biesta et al. (2017, 2015), Hökkä et al. (2017), King and Nomikou (2018), Philpott and Oates (2017), and Tao and Gao (2017) all investigated the development of teacher agency. Biesta and colleagues (2015) engaged in ethnographic research of six classroom teachers in Scotland over the span of one year, where they investigated teacher beliefs about agency. In 2017, Biesta et al. continued their work in Scotland, this time examining the role of teacher talk on their achievement of agency. Hökkä et al. (2017) focus on 11 Finnish teacher educators who participated in a teaching identity coaching program. Participants were interviewed before and after the program over the course of an eight-month period. Nine teachers in England were studied by King and Nomikou (2018) and were diverse in their years of experience as well as in their school contexts. Each participant was part of a professional development program that lasted two days. These teachers were observed and interviewed frequently throughout the school year.

Philpott and Oates (2017) investigated teacher perspectives through focus groups after participating in Learning Rounds observations in Scottish schools. In Tao and Gao's (2017) study, three teachers were identified from a group of eight and were observed and interviewed over the course of a year. Each of these studies noted an increase in the development of agency within participants. They noted important factors that lead to increased development of agency such as structures and culture (King & Nomikou, 2018; Philpott & Oates, 2017; Tao and Gao, 2017) as well as both professional and personal identity (Biesta et al., 2015; Hökkä et al., 2017).

Perspectives of agency. Researchers note the development of agency and discuss opportunities for participants to enact agency. However, when participants self-report their feelings of agency, they often focus on the lack of agency they experience. When agency was studied as part of a larger school reform (Lasky, 2005), teachers reported the reform movement left them feeling constrained. Similarly, when teachers were asked to participate in collaborative decision-making with agents other than fellow teachers, such as families, the teachers too, felt constrained.

However, the participants in van der Heijden et al.'s (2015) study felt that being professional was synonymous with the way the researchers define being a change agent: being a lifelong learner, being a skilled educator in both content and pedagogy, being an entrepreneur who takes risks, and someone who collaborates with others. The researchers noted, "All participants further indicated that the attributed characteristics are *inherent* to being professional teachers and therefore should be demonstrated by them in their professional daily practice at both levels" (van der Heijden, 2015, p. 689, emphasis in

original). When teachers exercise agency, they are exemplifying professionalism (van der Heidjen et al., 2015).

Representing Agency

As defined by the studies examined, agency can be defined first as being either personal or collective. For a person or a group to enact agency, there is a series of three conditions that must be met. First, one must believe they can influence and must possess a sense of purpose. According to some scholars, for a teacher to be able to exercise agency, they must first feel autonomous (King & Nomikou, 2018; Pantic, 2017). One must also continue to reflect on actions and beliefs to exert agency (Bandura, 2006; Biesta et al., 2017). Frequent reflection allows teachers to make adjustments as necessary, therefore providing more opportunities to enact agency. Additionally, frequent reflection leads to professional growth for educators and the opportunity to assist in the professional growth of colleagues (Calvert, 2016; Frost, 2006).

The studies supporting the definition of agency are detailed in Appendix F, which organizes the studies and papers regarding agency and provides information critical to the present research. Figure 2.1 summarizes the data represented in Appendix F and provides a visual definition for agency.

The major tenets of agency include reflection; the belief one can influence and a sense of purpose; and gathering resources and taking action and/or risks. Actions or risks taken are done with the support of relationships with colleagues, superiors, or both.

Figure 2.1

Elements of Agency
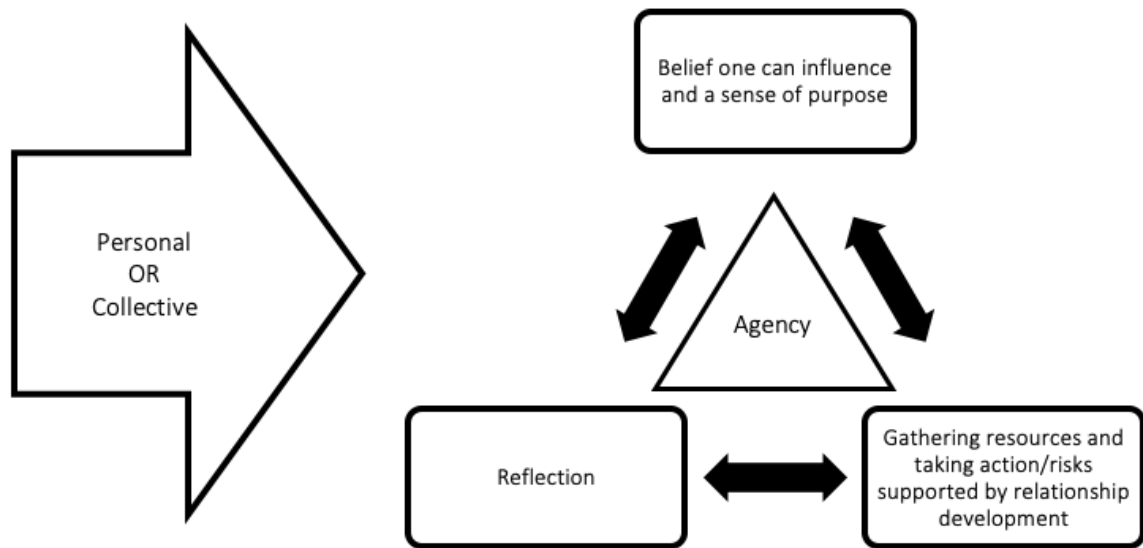
Note. Agency may be personal or collective.

Section Summary

The most widely accepted definition of teacher agency, according to the literature, is one that represents agency as something to enact rather than to possess, one in which teachers make decisions and select when to take action. Additionally, agency considers professional growth and does not discount human agency or collective agency. Teacher agency centers the teacher as the authority over his or her professional growth, and top-down leadership can inhibit this growth as well as perspectives of one's agency.

For the purpose of this study, agency is defined as being either personal or collective (Bandura, 2006) but requires one to possess a sense of purpose and a belief they can exert influence (King & Nomikou, 2018; Lasky, 2005; Pantic, 2017). When

enacting agency, one uses available resources to take risks or actions with the support of relationships and requires continued reflection (Bandura, 2006; Biesta et al., 2017; Pantic, 2017). These processes are iterative (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Frost, 2006).

<div align="center">**Autonomy**</div>

The following section will define autonomy and discuss studies about autonomy. It will discuss themes present in the literature reviewed followed by a diagram showing the overlap present in the literature thus illustrating autonomy. It will conclude with a summary of the section.

Defining Autonomy

The literature surrounding autonomy provides two nearly distinct views. One of these views is where autonomy is viewed as independence or a lack of constraints. The other is grounded firmly in the power to make decisions. While some researchers blur the lines slightly and can be inclusive of both broad definitions, each study favors one or the other for the purposes of this review.

Independence and lack of constraints. While noting that autonomy is ever-evolving, Vangrieken et al. (2017) claimed that autonomy can be considered either reactive or reflective; however, they ultimately supported a view of autonomy associated with individualism or independence. Vangrieken et al. (2017) noted "teachers' classroom autonomy is described as the degree to which they have ownership and freedom to make decisions about their classroom practice" (p. 305). In their quantitative study, they developed a 21-item questionnaire, which was administered twice to determine its validity. In the first administration, 1639 teachers from 37 high schools in Belgium completed the questionnaire. The second administration of the questionnaire resulted in

1133 of the first wave teachers responding. While not being as explicit, Little (1995) also supported a similar view of autonomy to that of Vangrieken et al. (2017), noting that autonomy is about accepting responsibility for one's actions, specifically, a learner is responsible for their learning. Little (1995) does not limit his definition of autonomy to a specific age range, and therefore this is extended to teachers as learners. Hyslop-Margison and Sears (2010) also included responsibility when defining autonomy, asserting that educators are situated "as the primary authors of their own success or failure" and are thus encouraged to exert ownership in their teaching (p. 2).

Responsibility can be associated with having reduced limitations from superiors, which is how Wang and Zhang (2014) defined autonomy. They also noted that one's autonomy could be developed through teacher research. Strong and Yoshida (2014) referred to the shift in the definition of autonomy in the teaching profession over time due to the accountability movement and asserted that in the past, autonomy referred to freedom from external interference, pressure, and control from superiors. They defined autonomy as independence and control, as opposed to being controlled by others, the ability to make decisions, and the opportunity to use discretion.

Power in decisions. To expand on autonomy as the idea of independence or a lack of constraints, Shalem et al. (2018) differentiated between two notions of autonomy as laid out in this review. Shalem et al. (2018) identified *strong autonomy* as freedom from societal constraints, whereas *weak autonomy* was in relation to authority. Their study applied the definition of weak autonomy to investigate teachers' opportunities to make curricular and pedagogical decisions. Shalem et al. (2018) noted that "[teachers] need to have recourse to experience which is meaningful and validated by knowledge and

33

evidence" (p. 207), meaning, teachers were free to make decisions as long as the teachers could defend their instructional decisions should someone question them.

Some studies were clearer and more concise with their definitions of autonomy, asserting a primary feature of teacher autonomy is the power to make decisions or exercise discretion (Honig & Rainey, 2012; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Strong & Yoshida, 2014; Torres, 2014). Honig and Rainey (2012) used the terms autonomy and discretion interchangeably and addressed whole-school autonomy as opposed to the autonomy of a single teacher. This is important because autonomy in the classroom does not indicate autonomy at the school level and can impact teacher perspectives of their autonomy. While a teacher's individual autonomy relates to decisions at the classroom level, whole-school autonomy provides opportunities for teachers to have a role in decision-making that impacts a broader audience: the school rather than one classroom. Strong and Yoshida (2014) also discussed autonomy as whole-school autonomy in addition to teacher autonomy. Whole school autonomy is conceived as an attempt at decentralization of power away from school administrators and sharing it with the faculty (Honig & Rainey, 2012).

Alternatively, Ingersoll and May (2011), rather than using discretion and autonomy interchangeably, discussed that the opportunity to exercise discretion might exist alongside the opportunity to be autonomous. Some studies referred to autonomy as the opportunity for teachers to exercise agency, to take charge of their own growth, and/or to solve their own problems (Biesta et al., 2015; Short, 1994). Perhaps the most inclusive definition of autonomy includes responsibility, collaboration, participation, and both cultural and political concerns; this definition considers human feelings, rationality,

and responsible actions and values (Rosalba Cárdenas, 2006). Autonomy can also be developed through awareness of and attention to those factors, along with general self-awareness and experiencing challenges. Educators may develop self-awareness, and encountering challenges may be experienced when changing roles. A change in roles could be moving from one grade level or content area (or both) to one new to the teacher, assuming a leadership role such as team leader or department chair, or beginning work in a different school.

Studies about Autonomy

Compared to the other terms investigated in this literature review, quality studies about autonomy were less common. Of the literature regarding autonomy, seven were studies. Of those, three were qualitative and four were quantitative. There were no mixed-methods studies. All studies employing quantitative methods used surveys and had as few as 171 to as many as 1639 participants. The qualitative studies were significantly smaller in scale, averaging 13 participants per study, with one exception. The largest qualitative study had 45 teacher participants who were broken up into 12 small groups, with each group working with 1 or 2 university researchers—all of whom were participants in the study. The other studies focused specifically on classroom teachers. The research purposes can be divided into two groups: one set of studies investigated what constitutes autonomy, while the others examined conditions that either supported or undermined teacher autonomy.

What constitutes autonomy? Vangrieken et al. (2017), through two phases of research, attempted to both conceptualize and to measure teacher autonomy. With an initial survey receiving 1639 responses, and a follow-up survey receiving 1133 responses,

the researchers had a significant amount of data with which to work. Through their data analysis, Vangrieken et al. (2017) revealed two major iterations of autonomy within the Belgian teachers surveyed: reflective autonomy and reactive autonomy. Reactive autonomy focused on independence and non-reliance and tended to hinder teacher collaboration and collegiality. Reflective autonomy focused on personal choice and feelings of autonomy and facilitated collaboration among colleagues. Reflective autonomy in teachers resulted in their looking to colleagues for support and advice when making classroom decisions, both curricular and pedagogical. Biesta et al.'s (2015) qualitative study had six classroom teacher participants. The analysis of Biesta et al.'s (2015) study revealed autonomy as it relates to agency: autonomy must exist for agency to be possible. Without autonomy, there was no opportunity for teachers to act agentically.

What conditions support or undermine autonomy? The remainder of the research regarding teacher autonomy can be categorized as investigating the conditions that either support or undermine teacher autonomy. Wang and Zhang (2014) followed 45 classroom teachers, split into 12 small groups, on a collaborative action research project with university partners. Each small group was assigned one to two university researchers, all of whom were participants in the study. Through open-ended questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis, the researchers learned that action research helped to develop autonomy in the classroom teachers. According to Wang and Zhang (2014), "Teachers developed a better understanding of what they do in the classroom and moved a major step forward toward teacher autonomy by being engaged in research" (p. 235).

36

Torres (2014) was unique in his work, as he focused specifically on autonomy in charter schools. His research, which included the interviews of 20 teachers, confirmed that the charter school teachers did have autonomy in certain classroom-level decisions, which is unsurprising as autonomy is considered a "cornerstone" of the charter school movement (Torres, 2014). The teachers reported possessing a substantial level of autonomy as it related to creating and teaching curricula. However, the study also highlighted the lack of autonomy the charter school teachers had specifically regarding behavior management, which may drive teacher turnover.

Strong and Yoshida (2014) focused on five factors of autonomy in their quantitative study: curriculum development, professional development, student assessment, classroom management, and school-wide operations. They used a large-scale survey called the Teacher Work-Autonomy Scale, which was sent to teachers across the state of Michigan. The survey had a 30% (477 teachers) response rate. Across grade levels, teachers noted feeling the greatest autonomy in terms of classroom management, which differs from the lack of behavior management reported in Torres' (2014) study of charter school teachers. While secondary teachers felt a significantly higher level of autonomy compared to their elementary counterparts, based on survey responses, both groups ranked the five factors in the same order, meaning while secondary teachers felt more autonomous overall, the teachers rated where they felt the most and least autonomous in the same order. Teachers felt most autonomous regarding curriculum development, followed by professional development, classroom management, and student assessment. Teachers felt the least autonomous regarding schoolwide operations.

The 15 teachers interviewed by Shalem et al. (2018) participated in a professional development program, which included the development of standardized lesson plans (SLPs) and the implementation of coaching to assist with those plans. All participants mentioned the SLPs boosted their confidence regarding being "an authority" on the content, and the researchers highlighted the relationship between autonomy and authority. Teachers expressed the autonomy to create the SLPs underscored their knowledge, which boosted their confidence in their knowledge of the content and made them feel like "authorities" on the topics of the SLPs. While the SLPs increased teacher morale, additional individualized refinement to the coaching process was needed to improve the teachers' experiences. Pearson and Moomaw (2006), like Ingersoll and May (2011), connected teacher autonomy to teacher retention. In a survey of 171 teachers, Pearson and Moomaw linked autonomy to several constructs, with the existence of teacher autonomy emerging as a critical factor for increased teacher retention. Autonomy in this study referred to teacher flexibility in instructional planning and sequencing, as well as selection of teaching materials.

For teachers to experience autonomy within schools, they must be granted the opportunity to engage in professionalism through increased responsibility and accountability (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Little, 1995; Pearson & Moomaw, 2006; Rosalba Cárdenas, 2006). To feel autonomous, educators need opportunities to exercise decision-making and change-making abilities at the school and/or classroom level (Biesta et al., 2015; Honig & Rainey, 2012; Pearson & Moomaw, 2006; Shalem et al., 2018; Short, 1994). Increased autonomy leads to increased job satisfaction and retention of teachers,

while a lack of autonomy may lead to decreased job satisfaction, higher teacher turnover and a negative school climate (Torres, 2014; Vangrieken et al., 2017).

Representing Autonomy

Teacher autonomy refers to opportunities teachers have to make decisions or changes as they see fit. These opportunities exist at either the classroom level or the school level. With increased autonomy comes increased responsibility and accountability, as well as one's perspective of being treated like a professional. The studies supporting the definition of autonomy are detailed in Appendix G, which organizes the studies and papers regarding autonomy and provides information critical to the present research. Figure 2.2 summarizes the data represented in the table and provides a visual definition for autonomy.

Teacher autonomy provides educators with either decision-making or change-making ability at the classroom and/or school level. Teachers granted autonomy are required to exhibit professionalism, incur increased responsibility, and are held accountable for their actions.

Section Summary

Based on the literature, the most inclusive definition of teacher autonomy is one in which teachers are given the opportunity and/or power to make decisions. The tenet that autonomy results in individualism or independence, a teacher alone in his or her classroom, is outdated. Autonomy, however, is multifaceted: teachers can have varying levels of autonomy as it relates to curriculum development, professional development, student assessment, classroom management, and school-wide operations. Context and

leadership will determine autonomy, and autonomy is a factor in the ability to exercise agency.

Figure 2.2

Elements of Teacher Autonomy
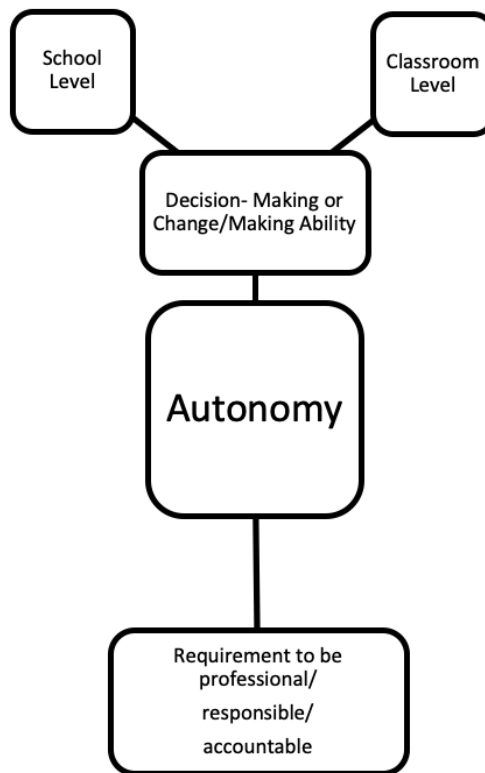
For the purpose of this study, teacher autonomy is defined as the opportunity to exercise decision-making or change-making abilities, contingent upon increased responsibility, accountability, and overall professionalism (Biesta et al., 2015; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Shalem et al., 2018).

<div align="center">

Self-Efficacy

</div>

The following section will define self-efficacy and discuss studies about self-efficacy. It will discuss themes present in the literature reviewed, followed by a diagram

showing the overlap present in the literature thus illustrating self-efficacy. It will conclude with a summary of the section.

Defining Self-Efficacy

The research and literature about teacher self-efficacy showed the most consistencies across data sources regarding a definition for the term as compared to the other terms addressed in this chapter. All the research held the same major tenets and a few included extra conditions. Generally, though, the research pointed to Bandura's (1997) definition of self-efficacy. Bandura wrote, "Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). Teacher self-efficacy is a teacher's beliefs about his or her abilities and/or competency to positively impact or affect student learning (Cantrell & Callaway, 2008; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Short, 1994; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2000).

Some of the research varied slightly in how self-efficacy was defined. For example, Perera et al. (2018) were precise in their definition about self-efficacy and noted it related specifically to teachers' "ability to manage classrooms, engage students, and use effective instructional strategies" (p. 172). Cantrell and Callaway (2008) also provided a modified definition, noting that teacher perspectives of self-efficacy were despite perceived barriers to student achievement such as low socioeconomic status or difficult home life. While this modification may be assumed in other definitions, the researchers chose to add this specific language about barriers. Ninkovic and Floric (2018) asserted that teacher-self efficacy was a result of an observation of one's own abilities, the only study reviewed that included self-reflection as a factor in perspectives of self-efficacy.

Studies about Self-Efficacy

When comparing the studies investigating self-efficacy, what cannot go unnoticed is the substantial number of quantitative methods used as compared to the other terms in this literature review. Of the 11 studies in this section of the review, five are strictly quantitative, and four used mixed-methods, leaving only two purely qualitative studies. The studies can be divided into two major groups: studies that focused on either the development or implementation of a scale/survey, and studies that focused on case studies and interviews. All participants were either current teachers or preservice teachers.

Development or implementation of a scale or survey. Eight of the 11 studies involved either the design, implementation, or both, of a scale or survey. Studies ranged in size from six to 574 participants. Two studies first developed their own scales to measure teacher self-efficacy and both concluded that self-efficacy is multidimensional (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). One dimension is a teacher's belief that his or her hard work to teach students impacts student achievement, and another dimension is a teacher's expectation that any teacher's ability to impact student achievement is or is not dependent on factors such as home environment. In addition to the development of the scale, it was asserted that student achievement may positively correlate with teacher self-efficacy (Gibson & Dembo, 1984), and low teacher self-efficacy strongly correlates with teacher burnout (Skaalvic & Skaalvic).

Several studies aimed to measure teacher self-efficacy and/or the relationship between self-efficacy and other constructs such as job satisfaction, teacher burnout, subject knowledge, behavior management, and whether the classroom is teacher- or

student-centered. (Glackin & Hohenstein, 2018; Gonzalez et al., 2017; Klassen & Durksen, 2014; Ninkovic & Floric, 2018; Perera et al., 2018; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2000). All six teacher participants in Glackin and Hohenstein's (2018) case study reported high self-efficacy. In addition to perceived self-efficacy, Glackin and Hohenstein (2018) investigated outcome expectancy and were better able to predict subsequent teacher behaviors and pedagogical choices, such as the implementation of hands-on activities versus teacher demonstrations. They claimed their use of mixed methods, including surveys, observations, and interviews, helped to create a richer representation of each participant.

While Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2000) had 251 participants in their study including surveys and scales, their findings were not statistically significant. However, they did note a positive relationship between extra-role behavior of teachers and their self-efficacy. Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2000) defined extra-role behavior as "those behaviors that go beyond specified role requirements, and are directed towards the individual, the group, or the organization as a unit, in order to promote organizational goals" (p. 650). Examples of extra-role behavior include but are not limited to volunteering for committees, sharing resources with other teachers, and spending additional time with students. Self-efficacy is highest in teachers who, according to personality tests, are labeled as "well-adjusted" and are therefore characterized as being outgoing, agreeable, and open (Perera et al., 2018).

However, one study found that job-related stress significantly impacted teacher self-efficacy. The higher the job-related stress, the lower the self-efficacy (Gonzalez et al., 2017). Conversely, Klassen and Durksen (2014) anticipated job-related stress would

decrease self-efficacy, but their analysis did not support that assumption. Their study of teacher candidates found that most teacher candidates displayed increased self-efficacy with experience and that high self-efficacy could exist with high stress. Additionally, teacher self-efficacy could lead not only to increased student achievement, but also to collective teacher efficacy.

Ninkovic and Floric (2018) claimed, "When teachers believe they are personally competent to teach, this [belief] can lead to better academic achievements of students and, consequently, to more positive perceptions of the efficacy of the school staff" (p. 60). While not a study, a literature review by Klassen et al. (2011) warned against a weak or false connection between teacher self-efficacy and student outcomes, claiming unreliable measurement instruments and the need to diversify research methods to include more qualitative studies in the body of teacher self-efficacy research. They assert, "[Quantitative] measures of self-efficacy should reflect judgments of forward-looking capability, not current ability or external constraints, and should be phrases with *can*, rather than *will*" (Klassen et al., 2011, p. 39, emphasis in original).

Case studies and interviews. Three of the studies about self-efficacy prioritized qualitative methods, but they are not solely qualitative studies. One of the studies used mixed methods and included a statistical analysis of 80 preservice teachers (Del Grecco et al., 2018). The other two studies, Glackin (2016) and Cantrell and Callaway (2008), included six and 16 participants respectively. As opposed to the studies focused on scale or survey design and/or implementation, much of the data collected from the more qualitatively minded studies lacked significance. Del Grecco et al., (2018) found that when teacher candidates were exposed to inquiry-based science teaching methods, their

self-efficacy increased. However, this study examined student perspectives before and after taking a course. While there was correlation before and after a course focusing on a pedagogical strategy, like inquiry-based teaching, there was no evidence of causation.

Glackin's (2016) study included six teacher participants who engaged in a professional development program regarding outdoor learning. Those educators who held "traditional" beliefs (teaching inside a classroom) were unchanged by the professional development, while teachers who were described as the opposite of "traditional" were labeled to have social constructivist beliefs benefitted from the professional development and showed increased self-efficacy over time. The researcher was exhaustive: Glackin (2016) analyzed written reflections and questionnaires of the participants, reviewed field notes from observations, transcribed and analyzed interviews, and even reviewed the field notes of others. This data-rich study, however, showed negligible impact of the professional development program on teacher beliefs in their capability, or their self-efficacy, as self-efficacy correlated to whether the teacher was traditional or a social constructivist.

Similarly, Cantrell and Callaway (2008) also studied the implementation of a professional development program. A new pedagogical technique was introduced and implemented in a school, and participants in the study were categorized as high or low implementation teachers based on their use of the new content strategies. Regardless of implementation level, the teachers generally expressed concerns about their abilities to carry out the implementation–they expressed low self-efficacy in this instance. The researchers asserted that when introducing a pedagogical change such as a new program or strategy, teachers who generally report lower self-efficacy will be more resistant to the

change. This potential resistance to change should be considered when planning a program implementation to anticipate and provide appropriate supports for teachers of all levels of self-efficacy and implementation.

Representing Self-Efficacy

A teacher's self-efficacy is impacted by his or her views of effectiveness as a classroom teacher (Bandura, 1997; Cantrell & Callaway, 2008; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Glackin & Hohenstein, 2018; Glackin, 2016; Klassen & Durksen, 2014; Perera et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Short, 1994; Somech & Drack-Zahavy, 2000). Personal and professional experiences of educators can impact their feelings of self-efficacy (Del Grecco et al., 2018). These feelings are multidimensional, therefore making self-efficacy a complex phenomenon (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). A teacher's level of self-efficacy may influence student achievement gains (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Ninkovic & Floric, 2018). A teacher's level of self-efficacy may also influence classroom decisions, along with interactions and effort with students (Gonzalez et al., 2017).

Self-efficacy is one's belief that they are influential and can successfully complete his or her job. It is multidimensional and can be impacted by experiences. Teacher self-efficacy may influence student achievement gains, teacher effort, and teacher decisions. The studies supporting this definition are discussed in greater detail in Appendix H, which organizes the studies and papers regarding self-efficacy and provides information critical to the present research. Figure 2.3 summarizes the data represented in the table and provides a visual definition for self-efficacy.

Figure 2.3

Elements of Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is one's beliefs as to whether they are influential and able to complete a job or task. One's feelings of self-efficacy may be impacted by experiences. Self-efficacy is multidimensional. The level of a teacher's self-efficacy may influence several factors including teacher decisions and effort; interactions with students; and student achievement gains.

Section Summary

The literature provided Bandura's (1997) as the consistently accepted definition for self-efficacy: a person's beliefs about their capabilities to create and execute a plan of action successfully. Teacher self-efficacy has been more explicitly defined as a teacher's beliefs about his or her ability to positively impact student learning. This area of research is heavy in quantitative data, and one group of researchers suggests the methods are not valid. There is a need to investigate self-efficacy with more diverse data collection methods.

For the purpose of the study, *teacher self-efficacy* is defined as a teacher's feelings of being influential and possessing the ability to complete his or her job successfully (Bandura, 1997; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Glackin, 2016; Perera et al., 2018). These feelings are multidimensional (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007) and can be impacted by experiences (Del Grecco et al., 2018).

Empowerment

The following section will define empowerment and discuss studies about empowerment. It will discuss themes present in the literature reviewed followed by a diagram showing the overlap present in the literature thus illustrating empowerment and how the constructs of agency, autonomy, and self-efficacy are integrated into empowerment. It will conclude with a summary of the section.

Defining Empowerment

Lightfoot (1986) noted, "*Empowerment* is a wildly overused word that has become part of the rhetoric of today's educational discourse and exchange. With overuse, its currency as a tool of expression has been diminished" (p. 9). That statement was made

over 30 years ago, and with the institution of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (USDOE, 2002) in the early 2000s, researchers moved away from teacher empowerment and focused on accountability and student test scores. However, studies of empowerment are increasing, as a search for articles in academic journals referencing teacher empowerment in the last three years (2016-2018) yielded nearly 500 results. Those using the term *empowerment*, however, should heed Lightfoot's advice to maintain the power of the term. The literature shows a split in the use of the term. Several articles share an explicit definition, while others describe situations of empowered people—what it might look like, or what might happen as a result of being empowered. The following sections break the texts into those categories.

Definitions. Who is responsible for empowerment? Does it come from within, or must one be empowered by another? Seed (2006) wrote that one must be empowered by another, noting that teachers are empowered by their administrators when they are given autonomy to make classroom decisions. Teachers who are empowered by their leaders are more likely to take risks and are more likely to take on leadership roles themselves, whether formal or informal (Seed, 2006; Trust, 2017). Similarly, Bogler and Nir (2012) referred to empowerment coming from an outside source, as it is a tactic used by organizational leaders "as a means to express the appreciation and support of their employees" (p. 289).

While not directly stating empowerment comes from a source other than oneself, Lightfoot (1986) defined empowerment as the opportunities for "autonomy, responsibility, choice, and authority" (p. 9). Empowerment does not reside within individuals because autonomy, responsibility, choice, and authority are governed by

superiors. Empowerment is something that can be activated in one of two ways: by someone, often in a leadership position compared to the empowered (or disempowered) person, or empowerment can be activated through the existence of a set of conditions. However, it is important to note that those conditions may only exist with the permission of those in power.

Conversely, rather than noting empowerment to be a strategy or gift bestowed by superiors in the workplace, Short and Rinehart (1992) developed a scale to measure empowerment. The scale breaks empowerment into six dimensions to be measured: decision-making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy, and impact. These dimensions are widely accepted in the literature (Bogler & Nir, 2012; Bogler & Somech, 2004, Short, 1994; Stolk et al., 2016). Empowerment is seen as a competence to be grown and developed (Bogler & Somech, 2004; Howe & Stubbs, 1997; Short, 1994; Short & Rinehart, 1992). By definition, someone who is empowered can take charge, especially of one's growth, as well as problem-solve as necessary (Bogler & Somech, 2004; Howe & Stubbs, 1997; Short et al., 1994; Short & Rinehart, 1992, Stolk et al., 2016).

One definition of empowerment stood out from the rest. Stromquist (1995) wrote more broadly regarding empowerment:

> Empowerment in its emancipatory meaning, is a serious word--one which brings up the question of personal agency rather than reliance on intermediaries, one that links action to needs, and one that results in making significant collective change. It is also a concept that does not merely concern personal identity but brings out a broader analysis of human rights and social justice. (p. 13)

Stromquist (1995) continued by defining just *who* should be empowered and notes adult women should be the central focus of empowerment initiatives, as their lives often produce multiple experiences of subordination, and that transforming these women will break the patriarchal cycle. Stromquist, like others, connected empowerment to other constructs: agency (as mentioned above), and autonomy: She noted that autonomy and empowerment were not dissimilar and asserted that autonomy emphasized the psychological aspect of empowerment.

Descriptions. Rather than clearly and concisely defining empowerment, some of the literature described situations in which teachers were empowered or described the impact of empowered teachers on their surroundings. For example, Trust (2017) discussed the feelings of empowered teachers. She noted that when teachers felt empowered, they were more likely not only to make changes in their teaching as necessary, but they also became leaders and helped their colleagues to make changes, as well. Additionally, participants in her study believed they were more innovative because of their empowering professional development.

Similarly, Balyer et al. (2017) described how teachers, through empowerment, discovered their potential, as well as their limitations, and developed their own competence. Furthermore, they discussed the positive relationship between teacher empowerment and student success and noted the importance of collaboration and teacher leadership, emphasizing non-hierarchical relationships at the heart. Balyer et al. also addressed empowerment through the lenses of autonomy and self-efficacy. When granted autonomy, teachers were more likely to take risks and develop their skills, such as self-efficacy. The development of self-efficacy "may also enable teachers to link theory to

practice" (p. 11). The literature not only illustrates the clear differences between agency, autonomy, self-efficacy, and empowerment, but also shows how they are inextricably linked.

Rather than describing how empowerment looks, Wall and Palmer (2015) discussed ways to achieve empowerment. They asserted that the path to teacher empowerment is through an inquiry approach regarding their professional learning—that is, allowing teachers to make decisions regarding their own growth. Also straying from the pattern seen in the literature were Avidov-Ungar and Arviv-Elyashiv (2018), who focused on disempowerment instead of empowerment. They discussed how a reduction of autonomy for teachers would not only lead to the disempowerment of teachers but would also leave them feeling professionally marginalized.

Defining empowerment for this study. When looking to the literature to define empowerment, each of the additional terms listed in this literature review were mentioned at least once as a component of what empowerment is: agency, autonomy, and self-efficacy. For the purpose of this study, empowerment is defined as a connecting term that focuses on the conditions through the teachers' perspective: to be empowered, teachers need to have the opportunity to enact agency, to be autonomous (in some regards) and believe in their self-efficacy, and they must be in contexts where those in power not only allow these conditions, but also encourage teachers to take advantage of them.

Studies about Empowerment

Of the empowerment literature reviewed, nine were studies investigating some aspect of teacher empowerment. Within these nine studies, four were strictly qualitative, four were strictly quantitative, and one used a mixed methods approach. The qualitative

studies, as expected, had fewer participants, ranging from six to 150. Methods used included short answer surveys, interviews, focus groups, and portraiture (Balyer et al., 2017; Lightfoot, 1986; Stolk et al., 2016; Trust, 2017). Quantitative studies were much larger in scope, ranging from 79 to 2565 participants. Methods used in the quantitative studies were limited to survey instruments (Avidov-Ungar & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2018; Bogler & Nir, 2012; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Short & Rinehart, 1992). The mixed methods study used a telephone survey, and from those participants, a smaller group was selected for a focus group.

Studies included the design and use of the Short and Rinehart (1992) empowerment scale (Bogler & Nir, 2012; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Short & Rinehart, 1992), investigated teacher perspectives of empowerment (Balyer et al., 2017; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Trust, 2017), and measured the impact of empowerment initiatives and models (Avidov-Ungar & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2018; Howe & Stubbs, 1997; Short et al., 1994; Stolk et al., 2016). Lightfoot (1986) investigated and created portraits of six empowered schools.

Teacher empowerment scale. Through a series of three smaller studies, Short and Rinehart (1992) developed the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES). Ranging from 79 to 211 participants depending on the phase, the researchers developed a questionnaire that began with 11 dimensions of empowerment. Using a series of phases to refine the product resulted in a six-dimension scale used frequently for quantitative work investigating teacher empowerment. Two additional studies used the SPES (Bogler & Nir, 2012; Bogler & Somech, 2004), surveying 2565 and 983 teachers respectively. Bogler and Nir (2012) and Bogler and Somech (2004) determined that the most

influential dimension of empowerment is self-efficacy, but also highlighted the need for school leaders to home in on a specific dimension of empowerment relative to the qualities they hoped to promote in their schools.

Teacher perspectives of empowerment. In a survey distributed to an online community of over 500,000 teachers, Trust (2017) received responses from 150 math teachers, most of whom were female and residing in the United States. Through an extension of the surveys which included in-depth interviews, she concluded that participants generally felt empowered through their voluntary participation in the professional learning community. Trust and her participants equated empowerment with confidence. Balyer et al. (2017) also used qualitative methods in the form of surveys and interviews to work with 20 teachers in Istanbul. Most participants in this study, which focused on the impact of school administrator roles, had negative views of the attempts made by administrators to empower them, did not feel their self-efficacy was developed, and felt their autonomy was not supported. The SPES created by Short and Rinehart (1992) was used to survey 983 teachers across 25 middle schools and 27 high schools. Those participants indicated positive responses toward four of the six dimensions of empowerment: status, professional growth, impact, and self-efficacy. Participants strongly indicated being excluded from decision-making activities.

Impact of empowerment initiatives and models. The studies investigating the impact of empowerment initiatives and models used a variety of methods (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods) and studied a range of participants (six to 633, as well as nine entire schools). They concluded that increased empowerment resulted in an increased drive to be leaders (Avidov-Ungar & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2018); professional

development done well could lead to teacher empowerment (Stolk et al., 2016); models

for empowerment were useful but could always be improved upon (Howe & Stubbs,

1997); and that regardless of the initiative, if the principal does not desire change, it will

not happen (Short et al., 1994). In her portraits of schools, Lightfoot's (1986) work

supported that of Short et al., which asserted, "empowerment cannot co-exist with the

rigid requirements of a hierarchical authoritarianism" (p. 10). Leaders should be open to

change to empower their teachers to be change-makers.

Conclusions from studies. Several factors may lead to the empowerment of

teachers. Lightfoot (1986) focused on autonomy, responsibility, choice, and authority.

She noted empowerment cannot exist in a rigid environment. Balyer et al. (2017) also

noted the importance of autonomy. Other conditions that may encourage empowered

teachers are defined as six dimensions: decision-making, professional growth, status,

self-efficacy, autonomy, and impact (Bogler & Nir, 2012; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Short

1994; Short et al., 1994, Short & Rinehart, 1992). Short et al. (1994) extended this

definition and asserted buy-in from administration is also necessary to foster teacher

empowerment.

Empowered teachers are more likely to self-discover their potential and

limitations and are more likely to exercise agency. Their schools are also likely to have

increased quality in their educational results (Balyer et al., 2017). Empowered teachers

are more likely to feel respected and have increased feelings of self-efficacy (Bogler &

Somech, 2004). Seed (2006) noted that teachers who feel empowered are more willing to

take risks (exercise agency) and take on leadership roles. Empowered teachers create

schools that are viewed as "good" for students (Lightfoot, 1986).

Representing Empowerment

Empowerment is a complex relationship between agency, autonomy, self-efficacy, and context. A teacher possesses autonomy when they have responsibility, decision-making power, and is held accountable for their decisions. A teacher's feelings of self-efficacy are rooted in whether they believe they are influential or effective with their students. To enact agency, a teacher must possess feelings of self-efficacy, be autonomous, and engage in action and reflection. When all three opportunities are present, filtered through context, a teacher may be empowered. The studies supporting the definition of empowerment are detailed in Appendix I. The table organizes the studies and papers regarding empowerment and provides information critical to the present research. Figure 2.4 summarizes the data represented in the table and provides a definition of empowerment for the purpose of this study.

Section Summary

A definition for teacher empowerment that is common among researchers includes six dimensions: decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy, and impact (Bogler & Nir, 2012; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Short, 1994; Short & Rinehart, 1992; Stolk et al., 2016). During the tenure of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (USDOE, 2002), empowerment research dwindled but is currently making a comeback. Empowerment is not likely to exist in contexts with patriarchal or authoritarian leadership. The conditions for empowerment must be facilitated and/or provided by the context and cannot come from within oneself. The research shows a fair number of both qualitative and quantitative, as well as mixed methods studies, leaving room for a type of study that suits the researcher and her audience.

Figure 2.4.

Elements of Empowerment
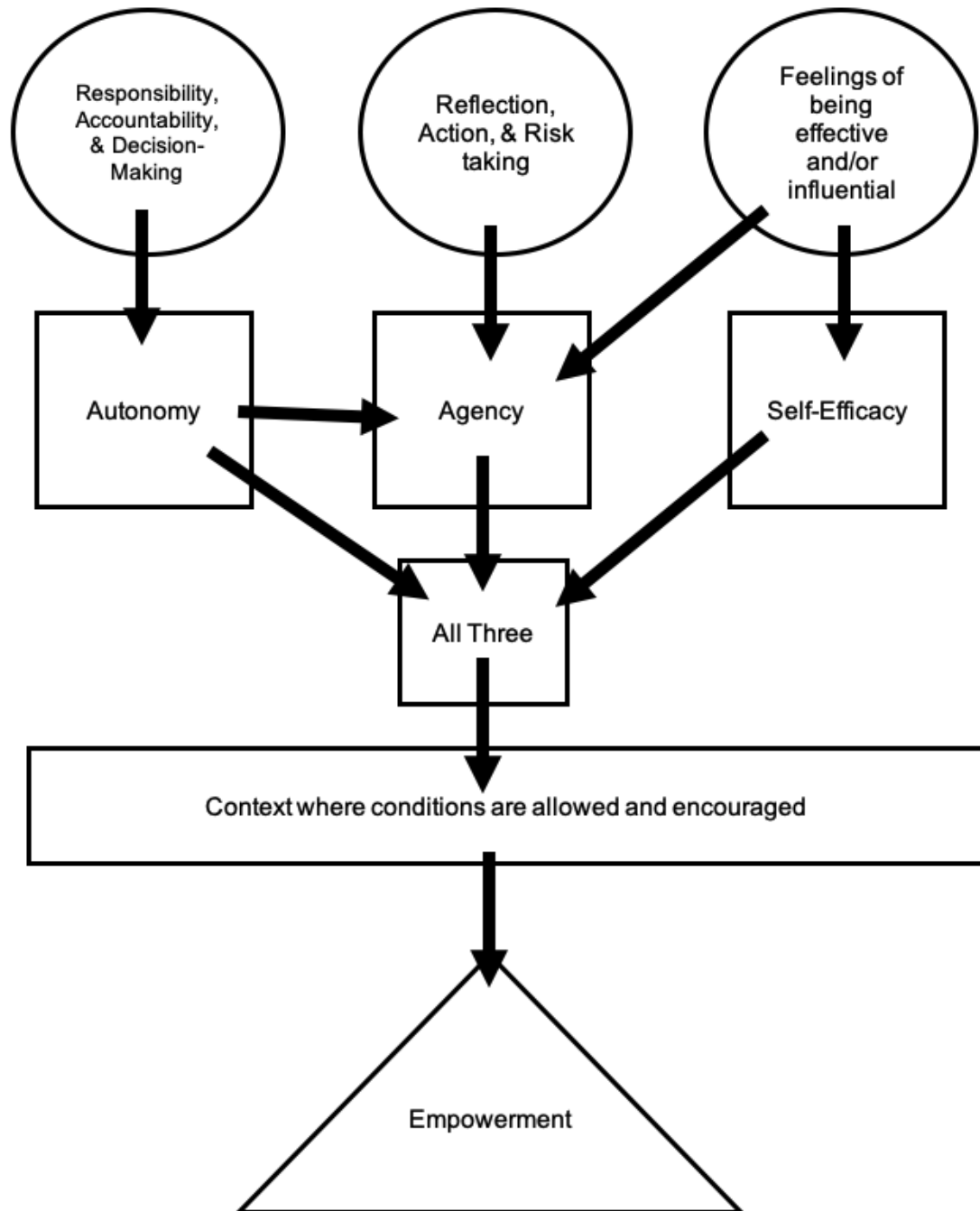
Note. Figure 2.4 illustrates the relationships between agency, autonomy, self-efficacy, and empowerment.

For the purpose of this study, teacher empowerment will be defined as a connecting term that focuses on the conditions of teacher roles through the perspective of the teachers. To be empowered, teachers need the opportunity to enact agency, to have some degree of autonomy and believe they are effective educators. The potential for empowerment exists in contexts where those in power not only allow these conditions to exist but also encourage teachers to take advantage of these conditions (Bogler & Nir, 2012; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Lightfoot, 1986; Short 1994; Short et al., 1994; Short & Rinehart, 1992).

Chapter Summary

The chapter began with an introduction to the literature review, noting research that indicates a lack of teacher autonomy and empowerment among today's educators. Four terms were selected for deeper engagement: agency, autonomy, self-efficacy, and empowerment. Then, the researcher reviewed literature for each term, focusing on definitions provided in the research, and cataloging studies related to each term. A summary and operational definition of each term for the purposes of the study is provided at the conclusion of each term section, in addition to a table summarizing the literature for each term, and a figure synthesizing the definition of the term. The chapter concluded with a figure depicting the relationships between the terms studied and a summary of the chapter. The following chapter presents the research design used to examine teacher perspectives of their experiences teaching during a summer learning program and during the academic year.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design and processes for the study will be detailed in this chapter.

The chapter will outline the following components of the research design, including the:

(1) purpose of the study, (2) research questions, (3) background of the study, (4)

theoretical framework, (5) research design, (6) study sample, (7) research methods, (8)

data collection methods, (9) data analysis processes and procedures, (10) limitations of

the study, and (11) a summary of the chapter.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate K-12 teacher perspectives of

empowerment across contexts and the factors that influenced those perspectives.

Specifically, the researcher examined K-12 teacher perspectives of empowerment as they

related to their practices in the context of their involvement in a summer learning

program and in the context of their work as classroom teachers during the academic

school year. Additionally, this study sought to identify factors that influenced teacher

perspectives of their empowerment across contexts.

The participants in the study taught in a K-12 classroom during the 2017-2018

and 2018-2019 school years and participated in Camp Ignite during summer 2018. The

researcher used a qualitative multi-case study approach to collect data regarding

participant perspectives and compared said data both within and across cases. Data

collection methods included a series of interviews, collection of artifacts such as journals,

school or district issued documents, and the researcher's field notes and memos. The data analysis was thematic in nature and produced codes, themes, and analytical concepts which used both inductive and deductive processes. The multi-case study was framed using experience as defined by Dewey.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate K-12 teacher perspectives of empowerment across contexts and the factors that influence those perspectives. Specifically, the study examined K-12 teacher perspectives of empowerment as they related to their practices in the context of their involvement in a summer learning program and in the context of their work as classroom teachers during the academic school year. Additionally, this study sought to identify factors that influenced teacher perspectives of their empowerment across contexts. The guiding research questions were:

1. What are K-12 teachers' perspectives of their experiences as instructors in a summer learning program?

2. How do K-12 teachers compare their experiences as instructors in a summer learning program to their experiences during the academic year?

3. What factors influence teachers' perspectives of their experiences across contexts?

This study uncovered common factors across contexts and cases that influenced teacher perspectives of empowerment by encouraging participants to reflect on and discuss their perspectives of their empowerment across contexts. The experiences of teachers in schools across the country, and by logical extension, the experiences of students as well

can potentially be impacted by gleaning an understanding of common factors that influence teacher perspectives of empowerment.

Background of the Study

Camp Ignite was a summer learning program that grew from the partnership between the College of Education at Weagle University and Magnolia County Public Schools (MCPS). During June of 2016, 2017, and 2018, the camp took place in a wing of a Magnolia County school building to provide engaging programming for rising Kindergarten through 8th grade students in the district.

Camp Ignite served as a space for experimenting with innovative pedagogical practices for university instructors, teacher candidates, graduate students, and local K-12 educators in an environment devoid of the pressures of standardized testing, promotion, and other measures typical in public schools while helping to prevent or ameliorate summer learning loss in its campers. The staff was a blend of university faculty and students, as well as teachers from across the state, but most were concentrated in the city surrounding Weagle University. The camper population each summer was designed to be as balanced as possible across grade levels and mirrored the population of the district across groups.

The researcher worked for Camp Ignite each summer in various roles. Most significantly, the researcher worked as the office manager, where she built relationships with various stakeholders such as teachers, university faculty, camper families, and community volunteers. These relationships provided opportunities for informal conversations, particularly with teachers involved with Camp Ignite. Discussions highlighted the freedom to make instructional decisions in the Camp Ignite context,

something teachers discussed as being limited in comparison to their academic year appointments. Teachers used terms like agency, autonomy, and empowerment to discuss their perspectives of both contexts.

The review of the related literature deepened and extended the researcher's knowledge of phenomena such as teacher agency, autonomy, self-efficacy, and empowerment. When reviewing the literature, the relationship between the terms became clear: they were intertwined, yet distinct from each other.

At the time of the study, a review of related literature revealed a relationship between the terms teacher agency, teacher autonomy, teacher self-efficacy, and teacher empowerment. The studies, which investigated the empowerment of teachers, did not discuss teacher perspectives of empowerment within a specific context or factors that influence those perspectives. However, the review provided an operational definition of empowerment for the purpose of this study and also explained that for teachers to express perspectives of empowerment, at least one of these concepts must also be felt: teacher agency, autonomy, and self-efficacy (Balyer et al., 2017; Bogler & Nir, 2012; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Short et al.,1994; Short & Rinehart, 1992; Stolk et al, 2016).

The literature reviewed at the time of the study revealed a gap in the literature regarding the interplay of the phenomena, teacher perspectives of empowerment and the influence of context on those perspectives. The researcher focused the study specifically on teacher perspectives of empowerment. Those perspectives were investigated as they referred to the summer learning program setting and the academic year setting. Additionally, the researcher investigated teacher perspectives as they existed across both contexts and the factors that influenced teacher perspectives.

Theoretical Framework

According to Lightfoot (1986), overuse of a term can diminish "its currency as a tool of expression," and even over thirty years ago, she considered the term *empowerment* to be so commonly used that it was at risk of losing meaning. However, the meaning of empowerment is elusive, as it is sometimes described as a goal, and other times as a process. Medel-Añonuevo and Bochynek (1995) noted that despite the wide use and attempted application of the term, from women's groups to governments and international agencies, there was a lack of understanding in how to measure it.

Researchers have attempted to capture levels of empowerment in teachers with quantitative measures like scales (Balyer et al., 2017; Bogler & Nir, 2012; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Short et al., 1994; Short & Rinehart, 1992; Stolk et al., 2016). However, the efficacy scales used were limited in the data they could capture and failed to provide a detailed account of each teacher's experience. Knowing this limitation, the researcher used qualitative methods to capture data in this study and used Dewey's concept of experience as a guide to structure the study and the data analysis.

Experience

Dewey (1916) connected the measurement of value of an experience to one's perspective of that experience. Therefore, in a study of teachers' perspectives of their experiences, it is necessary to understand how teachers' views of their empowerment across contexts are related to their experiences of empowerment. Guided by Dewey's works on experience (1916, 1938), the researcher analyzed and made meaning of the data collected from participants. Experiences are not independent, as one always affects the next; therefore, understanding perspectives of experiences can point toward the future

63

(Dewey, 1938). "All that the wisest man can do is observe what is going on more widely and more minutely and then select more carefully from what is noted just those factors which point to something to happen," (Dewey, 1916, p. 146). A meaningful study will take into account current circumstances and make recommendations for the future.

To make meaning of an experience, one must reflect. According to Dewey (1916), reflection was not only a way to make meaning but was to also accept and "acknowledge the responsibility of future consequences which flow from present action" (p. 146). The researcher asked participants to share their reflections of their experiences of empowerment across contexts. Dewey noted reflection was necessary to make meaning of an experience (1916). Making meaning of these experiences was inherent to the purpose of this study.

Research Design

The study was qualitative and focused on semi-structured interviews as the most significant data source. The study also included the collection of artifacts in the form of journals, school and district issued documents, and also included field notes and memos of the researcher. The data and analysis were presented through a descriptive sociological multi-case study to help explain how context impacts teacher perspectives of empowerment (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Merriam (2009) defines a case study as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 40).

To answer the initial questions, a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted and recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. According to Briggs (1986), an estimated 90% of research in the social sciences uses qualitative interviewing as a data collection method. As Patton (2015) noted, "We interview people to find out from them

those things we cannot directly observe and to understand what we've observed" (p.

426). He continued by adding, "The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter

into the other person's perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption

that the perspective of others is meaningful and knowable and can be made explicit"

(Patton, 2015, p. 426). Given that the initial purpose of this research was explicitly stated

to capture perspectives of those being interviewed, the process of interviewing was an

appropriate tool by which to collect data. The qualitative nature of interviews allows

researchers to deeply understand the experiences of their participants (Creswell, 2013;

Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 2009).

Within the qualitative traditions, the study was a case study. Patton (2015)

asserted that there is not an agreed upon definition of *case study* between social scientists

and methodologists, but he does provide guidance to frame a case study. He claimed,

"despite differences on emphasis, a common thread in defining a case study is the

necessity of placing a boundary around some phenomenon of interest," (Patton, 2015, p.

259). Case studies include a specific unit of analysis, and those units are classified as

either people or structure focused and then subclassified as one of the following:

perspective/worldview focused, place based, activity focused, time based, analysis

focused, or document focused. Maxwell (2013) noted that in terms of case study research

the process is often as follows: the case is first selected, and then the research questions

are designed with the particular case in mind. Typically, participants are purposefully

selected.

The existing studies examining teacher empowerment showed a blend of research

methods from qualitative, to quantitative, to mixed methods. Studies were found to

investigate empowerment broadly but not across contexts. The researcher selected

qualitative methods because, based on the review of the related literature, they seemed to

be the most appropriate to address the research questions and provided the required depth

to address a concept as complex as perspectives of empowerment and factors influencing

those perspectives.

Study Sample

This study investigated the perspectives of educators who taught during the 2017-

2018 and 2018-2019 school years and who participated for Camp Ignite during the

summer of 2018.

Site Selection

The researcher gained access to the site because she was employed by Camp

Ignite for three years. The co-directors of Camp Ignite granted the researcher initial

access to study participants. Sites beyond the camp varied by participant, for the study

focused on teacher empowerment across contexts: Camp Ignite and the participant's

academic year school. The school context of each participant did not impact his or her

eligibility to participate in the study.

Sampling Strategy

According to Tracy (2013), "All researchers should strive toward a *purposeful*

sample, in which data and research questions/goals/purposes complement each other,"

but sampling should always be purposeful, and calling it *purposeful* does not describe the

manner in which the sample will be obtained (p. 135). Tracy (2013) went on to describe

convenience or opportunistic sampling, which is appropriate when time and/or money are

scarce. Given that the overarching goal of this study was to investigate the perspectives

of educators across contexts, convenience sampling was considered. However, the researcher was conflicted with the terminology. The conflict came from Roulston (2010), where she refuted the idea of convenience sampling all together:

> Researchers including participants in studies on the basis of ease of access or ready availability are using "convenience sampling." Strictly speaking, this [sampling style] is not a form of sampling, given that *sampling* is the process by which a *sub-set* of a population is identified and selected for the purpose of a particular study. Therefore, this [method] is not generally viewed as a rigorous approach given that researchers are not sampling a sub-set from a larger population based on any specific criteria. (p. 81)

Based on this literature, the researcher instead used criterion-based selection and identified participants that met specific criteria out of a larger population for the study (Roulston, 2010, p. 81). The larger population in the setting was composed of all Camp Ignite instructors. Their roles both within and outside of camp may have included university professor, K-12 educator, university student, volunteer, or some combination thereof. The criteria used to select participants were Camp Ignite instructors who not only taught during the school year prior to their Camp Ignite experience but who also taught full time in the school year following their work with Camp Ignite.

Participants

The study included eight teacher participants. Of the participants, seven of the eight were female. Similarly, seven of the eight participants worked in public schools while one worked in a private school. All of the participants taught in K-8 settings; two

67

of whom taught in middle school (grades 6-8) and six in K-5 settings. Six of the eight

participants were graduate students at Weagle University at the time of the study.

Potential participants were recruited with the assistance of Camp Ignite faculty

who were also faculty at Weagle University. The researcher asked Weagle University

faculty working at Camp Ignite to provide a list of graduate students in their courses who

taught during the 2017-2018 school year who were also planning to teach during the

2018-2019 school year. The Camp Ignite co-director, Dr. Naomi English, also helped

identify Camp Ignite staff who fit inclusion criteria. The researcher sent recruitment

emails to potential participants including the purpose of the study and the expectation to

participate in two semi-structured interviews. Participants who responded received a

follow up email from the researcher to set a date to meet for the initial interview.

During the initial interview, the researcher informed participants of the purpose of

the study, the efforts to keep participant names and school locations confidential, and

warned of potential risks. Participants were asked to take part in two interviews, one

during the summer of 2018 during Camp Ignite, and another near the end of the first

semester of the 2018-2019 school year, in either November or December. After the initial

interview, participants were also asked to keep a journal to assist in data collection for the

second interview.

Size of the Study

The size of the study reflects the number of participants who fit the inclusion

criteria. The session of Camp Ignite that took place during June 2018 had over 100 adult

participants, comprised of university faculty and staff, teacher candidates, local teachers

in instructional roles, and local teachers taking courses at the graduate level who also had

instructional roles. Only 14 adults within the population met inclusion criteria. Of those 14 adults, 10 responded to recruitment emails and due to scheduling, eight of the 10 respondents participated in the study.

Research Methods

The majority of social sciences use qualitative interviewing as a data collection method (Briggs, 1986). Interviews are a means for researchers to learn and to understand what cannot be observed. The purpose, then, of interviewing, is to gain another's perspective, all the while assuming that perspective is meaningful and can be articulated by the researcher (Patton, 2015). Given that the initial purpose of this research was explicitly stated to capture perspectives of those being interviewed, the process of interviewing was an appropriate tool by which to collect data.

Similarly, the researcher collected data through journals kept by participants. These entries acted as artifacts (Creswell et al., 2007; Merriam, 1998). Most participants kept online, password protected journals. One participant chose to keep a handwritten journal. These journals were classified as both physical artifacts and documents (Yin, 2012).

Interviews

As noted in Chapter 2, teacher empowerment has been investigated using a variety of methods from qualitative and quantitative, to mixed-methods studies. When the researcher noticed there was not one particular way to research teacher empowerment, she returned to her research questions and the literature. As the primary goal was to uncover how teachers viewed their empowerment, iterative interviews were used. Trust (2017) used interviews in her study of empowerment, motivation, and innovation "to

elicit more detailed responses… and to allow the researcher to co-construct meaning with participants about their actions and experiences" (p. 19). Similarly, in their study of fostering critical teacher agency, King and Nomikou (2018) also used interviews to gather data. Not dissimilar, Torres (2014) also used semi-structured, in-person interviews in his study of teacher autonomy and teacher turnover in charter schools. This multi-case study will include a series of two interviews per participant.

Document/Artifact Review

In addition to interviews, the researcher reviewed and analyzed documents she gathered - field notes and memos - along with artifacts submitted by participants: journals and other documents supplied by participants. The qualitative studies described in Chapter 2 most prominently used interviews, but some also used document analysis and/or observations (Trust, 2017; Wang & Zhang, 2014). Studies did not rely heavily on physical artifacts defined as such. However, while some researchers defined documents and physical artifacts more explicitly such as Yin (2012), others blurred the line, simply referring to them all as *artifacts* (Creswell et al., 2007, Merriam, 1998; Suzuki et al., 2007). Because this study was focused on teacher perspectives, observations were not an appropriate method.

<div align="center">

Data Collection Methods

</div>

To triangulate data, multiple methods of data collection were used (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). This multi-case study was comprised of a series of two interviews, as well as document analysis of journals completed by participants, field notes and memos of the researcher, and other artifacts collected during the research period.

Interviews

The researcher asked participants to participate in a series of two semi-structured interviews. Each interview was planned to be roughly 60 minutes in length; however, several initial interviews were closer to 90 minutes. The initial interview took place either during Camp Ignite, or shortly after the completion of Camp Ignite and was driven by the schedules of both the researcher and the participants. The interviews followed an interview guide approach (Patton 2015; Tracy, 2013). The researcher created an interview guide designed not only to get to know each participant but also to begin to address the research questions of the study. The interview guides were edited and refined using Castillo-Montoya's (2016) interview protocol refinement framework. All interviews of participants were based on the same interview guides. The researcher contacted each potential participant individually via email to schedule an initial interview. Interviews were audio-recorded and saved on the researcher's password-protected computer.

The researcher conducted interviews in a location chosen by the participant. Whenever possible, interviews took place in a room with a closed door to protect the privacy of the participant and to protect sound quality of audio recordings. All interviews were audio recorded using the Tape Recorder application on the researcher's cellular device, which was password-protected. Each interview began with a review of the informed consent document. Both the researcher and the participant signed two copies of the document and each retained one copy.

Upon the completion of the initial interviews, the researcher moved recordings from her cellular device to her computer. The audio files were either added to a

transcription program called ExpressScribe, or uploaded to rev.com, a transcription

service. The researcher transcribed the interviews, or had them transcribed, and saved the

verbatim transcription files on her computer. Files that were transcribed by the service

were checked against the audio upon receipt of the completed transcript files. The

researcher then created a copy of the transcription using pseudonyms for people and

places. Identifying information was added to a key document, which was also password-

protected. Once all transcriptions were completed and de-identified, the researcher began

initial data analysis of those interviews.

The initial analysis led to the construction of an interview guide for the follow up

interview of each participant, thereby making the interview process an iterative one

(Biesta et al., 2015; Lasky, 2005). This process took into consideration data collected

from the journals and participant-shared artifacts. As with the first interview guides, the

researcher employed Castillo-Montoya's (2016) interview protocol refinement

framework. Follow-up interviews took place during the second quarter of each

participant's school year during the months of November and December 2018. Before the

second interview, participants received a copy of the second interview guide to help them

to reflect and prepare prior to the session. Each round of interviewing followed the same

protocols regarding space, consent, and use of technology to collect, store, and manage

data.

Document Analysis of Artifacts

To triangulate data gathered during the interviews, this study included document

analysis. Yin (2009) asserted the necessity of document analysis for case studies, noting,

"Because of their overall value, documents play an explicit role in any data collection in

doing case studies," (p. 103). Similarly, Bowen (2009) expressed the importance of multiple data sources and related document analysis specifically to case study research.

Journals and participant documents. The researcher asked participants to keep a journal documenting instances after the first interview and prior to the second interview where they felt particularly empowered or disempowered. Journal prompts were shared with the participants via Google Docs. Journals are considered to be "self-revealing of a person's view of experiences" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2010, p.134). Additionally, participants were asked to share emails and other documents such as, but not limited to, agendas, meeting minutes, and flyers for programs in their school contexts (Bowen, 2009; Yin 2009).

Documents can be a data source because they are stable, unobtrusive, exact, and can reflect broad coverage (Yin, 2009). These documents were collected during the summer the participants participated in Camp Ignite and through the end of the first semester of the 2018-2019 school year. The journal entries were reviewed prior to the second interview because Simons (2009) asserts that "document analysis is often a helpful precursor to observing and interviewing, to suggest issues it may be useful to explore in the case and to provide a context for interpretation of interview and observational data" (p. 64).

Field notes and memoing. Throughout the course of the study, the researcher kept a journal to take field notes during interviews and used those notes to guide both interviews as well as the data analysis process. Additionally, memos were recorded after interviews and throughout the research process. These memos acted as a way for the researcher to record her thoughts about the research process, to provide details from

which to write thick description about participants throughout the process of research, and to ask questions. These field notes and memos helped the researcher narrow emerging themes throughout the analysis process (Simons, 2009).

Data Management

All data were kept in password-protected files on a password-protected computer if digital, and in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office if hard copies. These data included interview audio files, interview transcripts, field notes, consent forms, memos, artifacts collected for analysis from participants such as journals, emails, or other school information, documents containing analysis information, code books and labeling files, keys for pseudonyms in transcriptions, etc. This system was used to support ethical and confidential storing of data (Patton, 2015, pp. 496-497).

<div align="center">

Data Analysis Processes and Procedures

</div>

Data analysis consisted of several listening sessions of recorded interviews, several readings of transcripts and artifacts, and several sessions of memo writing. The researcher used a series of coding techniques to sort and interpret her data and build themes. The researcher used notecards to construct analytical concepts.

Deductive and Inductive Methods

Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data. The researcher used codes to build themes, and then converted those themes into analytical concepts (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). The researcher began data analysis by listening to the interview recordings several times and writing memos, including preliminary codes and themes. Then, she transcribed audio files and wrote memos to record thoughts and ideas regarding the data analysis during the time of transcription. For files transcribed by the online

transcription service, the researcher checked the transcription against the audio file and both made corrections and wrote memos. Once all transcription and memoing was complete, the researcher constructed a data inventory (Galman, 2016) and began analysis by reading through the data.

The first step of analysis was to sort the data into categories deductively based on terminology in the research questions, as well as the chosen conceptual and theoretical framework of experience. Galman (2016) called these categories buckets. The buckets in this study were comprised of overarching ideas and concepts from the framework and the research questions using a top-down approach, starting with big ideas and narrowing them down. To label these buckets appropriately while still doing deductive work with the data, the researcher began the analysis by creating a list of big ideas from the research questions and the chosen framewors. These one or two-word big ideas were the categories. Then, the researcher wrote a description for each category to define it more clearly.

These categories and descriptions acted as the initial codes for the study. The researcher then coded each interview transcript and artifact. Then, the researcher worked, as Galman (2016) wrote, to "explode" the data – looking to spread it all out and see the tiny pieces that make up the entire data set. Galman explained this concept as looking at a pie and then determining the ingredients of that pie. Similarly, the researcher looked at the data and determined the "ingredients" or main ideas of the data.

However, because not all data of value in the data set fit into these deductive categories, the researcher also inductively sorted the data into new categories that made sense or seemed relevant to the research questions. Conversely to deductive sorting, the

inductive bucket sorting used a bottom-up approach. By looking at the already-exploded

data, the researcher created a new set of inductive categories based on the data itself, also

known as open coding (Galman, 2016). Each type of sorting and category creation was a

round of coding: one deductive, and the subsequent, inductive.

Coding

After the creation of the deductive and inductive categories, it was time to fully

code the material. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) noted "codes are names or symbols

used to stand for a group of similar items, ideas, or phenomena that the researcher has

noticed in his or her data set. To determine the relative frequency of occurrence of items

or other phenomena, researchers have to code the data" (p. 56). Galman (2016) described

the process of coding data by using a system to make sense of data by finding patterns,

questions, connections, and links to research questions (p. 33). Codes are comprised of

abbreviations related to the phenomena. For example, a code for teachers discussing

empowerment was EMPR. A large, overarching code like EMPR, is what some

researchers refer to as a "mama bear" code (Hall, 2017).

The mama bear code of EMPR was broad, and participants provided more

nuanced information regarding the code requiring greater distinction. For example, when

a participant discussed empowerment in a negative manner, that portion of the transcript

was coded as EMPR-. When a participant related empowerment of oneself and of an

administrator, it was coded as both EMPRself and EMPRadmin respectively. These

subsets of codes are considered "baby bear" codes, and materialized during the inductive

coding process. Codes were derived using both within-case and cross-case analysis

(Ayres et al., 2003). To elaborate, codes were created and finalized by looking at codes

consistent across contexts for each participant's case, and then compared to other cases in the study.

As codes and their descriptions were created, they were added to a document that served as the codebook, or a key, for all the codes created during analysis. As codes were created, changed, and deleted, the actions were reflected in the codebook. Codes should be meaningful, low-inference, and complex (Galman, 2016, p. 36). After all information was coded, the codes were grouped into larger categories.

Theming and Analytical Concepts

The larger categories were comprised of groups of codes called themes. According to Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), "a theme is an implicit topic that organizes a group of repeating ideas," (p. 38). Much like codes were grouped to form themes, themes were then grouped together to build analytical concepts (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Hall, 2017). These concepts, or finalized themes, summarized the big ideas from the research, or the results.

Assessing Data Quality

Data quality is necessary for a study to be taken seriously and provide both meaning and relevance to the field. According to Freeman et al. (2007), "quality is constructed and maintained continuously throughout the life of a research project and includes decisions that researchers make as they interact with those they study as they consider their analyses, interpretations, and representations of data" (p. 27). The use of memoing documented the process.

Credibility. Yin (2015) asserted that credibility is established through trustworthiness, validity, and reliability (p. 197). To establish credibility as defined by

Lincoln and Guba (1986), the researcher triangulated the data by using the variety of data collection methods mentioned above. Suzuki et al. (2007) asserted "one could argue that by increasing the number of data sources in a study, researchers can gain a more complex and nuanced appreciation of a phenomenon of interest" (p. 322). The researcher participated in negative case analysis by defining analytical concepts as they emerged in the data analysis and theming process, and described how a negative case, or non-example might emerge. Additionally, the researcher participated in member checking and peer debriefing with colleagues as well as recent graduates, to "keep the inquirer honest" (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 77).

Transferability. Through memos, transcription, and data analysis, the data will be thick and descriptive through the "narrative developed about the context," (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 77). Thick description made visible the context of each, and through the building of themes within and across cases, the analytical concepts derived from the data are context-dependent, yet transferable.

Limitations of the Study

As this study is qualitative and was not conducted in a lab, there were limitations that may have constrained the study. The population of potential participants was extremely limited, as all participants must have been involved in Camp Ignite during summer 2018 and must also have been teachers during both the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. Many Camp Ignite participants were teacher candidates, and therefore did not qualify for participation in the proposed study, thus limiting the population of potential participants.

The study included eight cases, each case with a single participant, to comprise this multi-case study. Some of the potential participants did not respond to recruitment emails. Of the original 10 interested potential participants, only a portion were able to fully participate in the study, which provided the researcher with a complete data set of two interviews and a journal entry.

Because the camp context was one that was not only small, but one where many people saw and knew each other, another limitation was the ability of the researcher to keep the identities of each participant private and confidential. Initial interviews took place on-site at camp and in the hometown of most of the participants. There was potential for other participants in the study and non-participants to identify those participating in the study simply by being present in the same space. Camp was allocated to one wing of a school building, and the community was small. While efforts were made to remove identifying information from the finalized dissertation, complete anonymity could not be guaranteed.

Finally, due to the researcher's role in Camp Ignite, it is possible the familiarity some participants had with the researcher may have skewed what was shared. This skew may have impacted the data quality and subsequent analysis.

Chapter Summary

The chapter began with the purpose of the study and the research questions, followed by the background of the study. The chapter continued with a discussion of the conceptual framework of the study. Then, it discussed the research design, followed by the study sample, research methods, and the data collection methods. To conclude, the

data analysis processes and procedures were catalogued, as were the limitations of the study.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

This chapter discusses the findings that emerged during the data collection and analysis portions of the study. The chapter opens with the purpose of the study, the guiding research questions, and an overview of the study. Next, the researcher presents the case findings for each participant's perspectives of their experiences in a summer learning program. Then, the findings for each participant's perspectives of experiences during the academic year are presented. Finally, the researcher presents the cross-case analysis and a summary of the chapter.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate K-12 teacher perspectives of empowerment across contexts and the factors that influence those perspectives. Specifically, the study examined K-12 teacher perspectives of empowerment as they related to their practices in the context of their involvement in a summer learning program and in the context of their work as classroom teachers during the academic school year. Additionally, this study sought to identify factors that influenced teacher perspectives of their empowerment across contexts. The guiding research questions were:

1. What are K-12 teachers' perspectives of their experiences as instructors in a summer learning program?

2. How do K-12 teachers compare their experiences as instructors in a summer learning program to their experiences during the academic year?

3. What factors influence teachers' perspectives of their experiences across contexts?

This study was significant because teacher experiences differed across contexts: the summer learning context of Camp Ignite and the academic year classroom. This study was also significant because the research does not indicate significant data regarding teacher experience across educational contexts.

The participants in this study included eight educators across seven schools in five school districts. The educators who agreed to participate in the study were all instructors at Camp Ignite during June 2018 and teachers in the same southeastern state during the 2018-2019 school year. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, and artifacts from participants including but not limited to journal entries, and the researcher's field notes and memos. Data were collected and analyzed regarding participant perspectives across the camp and academic year contexts. Participants were interviewed twice, once during summer 2018 and once during late Fall 2018. Interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes each.

Overview of the Study

The study officially began when IRB approval was received on June 5, 2018. The researcher built a list of potential participants with the help of Camp Ignite staff. On June 11, 2018, 14 participants received recruitment emails. Of the 14, 10 responded and eight were able to coordinate with the researcher to schedule initial interviews. All eight educators participated in two interviews, and six of the eight completed journals.

The participants were diverse in teaching experience. Participants had anywhere from three to over 40 years of experience and ranged from Kindergarten to 12th grade in

grades taught, although during the study all taught either elementary school or middle school, grades Kindergarten through eighth grade. One participant was male, one participant was a media specialist, and one participant taught in a private school. All participants identified as either White and/or Latinx, considered themselves to either be middle or upper-middle class, and ranged in age from mid-twenties to mid-sixties. All participants have or were at the time of data collection completing an advanced degree. Four participants were married and had at least one child. It is unknown if the eight participants were representative of the 14 teachers who met inclusion criteria for the study.

Within-Case Analysis

The intent of this research study was to examine K-12 teacher perspectives of their experiences in a summer learning program, their experiences during the academic year, and to determine factors (if any) that influenced teachers' perspectives of their experiences across contexts. Therefore, each participant represented one case of the multi-case design of the study. The unit of analysis for each case was a Camp Ignite instructor describing his or her experiences of teaching during a summer learning program and teaching during the academic year.

Data analysis began immediately following initial interviews with participants, with the researcher listening to each interview at least three times and recording field notes before transcribing the interviews, as well as writing memos during transcription. Additionally, between the initial and follow up interview, the researcher reviewed artifacts and journals from participants and recorded memos. Each initial interview was analyzed using thematic analysis, both inductively and deductively to produce codes.

Journals were analyzed prior to each follow up interview, and then second interviews were analyzed thematically, as well. As codes emerged from the data, categories and sub-themes became apparent to the researcher. In the cross-case analysis, the researcher established themes for the entirety of the multi-case study.

Individual Perspectives of Experiences as an Instructor in a Summer Learning Program

Most of that data analyzed in the following section was captured during the first of two semi-structured interviews; however, some data emerged in participant journals and during the second interview. The following section includes individual perspectives from each case about the teacher's experience as an instructor during a summer learning program and answers the first research question: What are K-12 teachers' perspectives about their experiences as instructors in a summer learning program? The perspectives of each participant differ but were more alike than not. The descriptions provide an accurate account of each participant's perspectives regarding his or her experience as an instructor at Camp Ignite.

Yvette Landon

Yvette is a middle-aged mother of four from the Midwest. She began college as an engineering major, but quickly changed to education due to her love for children. She met her husband in college and followed him south, where they have remained ever since. Yvette began her career in a public school but left after a few years to stay home with her children until they were school-aged. She then returned to teaching, this time in a private school setting. She has taught at The Glisson School for the last 16 years, with her youngest child two years away from graduating.

During the summer learning program, Camp Ignite, Yvette took a graduate-level course regarding the importance of play for young children at school. Her professor designed the course so that Yvette and her classmates were leading instruction at Camp Ignite, as well as doing research regarding play. Yvette and her classmates acted as instructors at Camp Ignite two days a week.

The first interview with Yvette took place on August 14, 2018. It was the final initial interview completed for the study. Due to scheduling conflicts during Camp Ignite and the month following, Yvette chose to meet with the researcher when her summer vacation ended and she was back in her academic year classroom. Initially, she requested to meet at a local restaurant. Due to concerns of the researcher for both Yvette's privacy as well as sound quality for an audio-recorded interview, a different location was selected, with Yvette reserving a private room at the local public library. Yvette was eager to discuss her experiences, which resulted in the initial interview lasting two hours and 25 minutes, significantly longer than the anticipated one-hour time frame. When Yvette sat down for the initial interview, the first words out of her mouth were, "Awesome. I'm excited about it." Her excitement was evident throughout the interview, where she opened up immediately with the researcher and gave a significant level of detail in each response.

Relationships. A significant amount of Yvette's discussion regarding her experiences as an instructor in a summer learning program centered on her relationships with others. "Camp Ignite to me was all relationship." Yvette spoke about the relationships between the Camp Ignite staff as well as her relationships with university

faculty, and how those relationships made her experience at Camp Ignite enjoyable. She noted:

> I think it's almost like business relationships and personal relationships. Because it's… and so, the way I… personal being Camp Ignite and business being school. Because it was so enjoyable at Camp Ignite. I mean, learning and teaching was more of a pleasure. It just, it was not… there was no check-off list.

She described Camp Ignite as having relationships that felt more personal than her relationships formed at her school.

Yvette continued to discuss the relationships she built at Camp Ignite, especially with her professor and her classmates. Her professor, Dr. Ruby Ingram, encouraged Weagle University students to take control of their instruction with the campers, which resulted in Yvette feeling trusted and like a professional. She said, "Dr. Ingram did not control the class, she facilitated the class. So, when we went into plan she said, 'This is y'all's baby. Y'all need to talk with each other.' She really made us come together as a group." The structure of the course Yvette took through her involvement as an instructional leader at Camp Ignite not only highlighted relationship-building but also required it.

One afternoon at Camp Ignite, Yvette and some of her colleagues were invited to speak with some high school students about advice for college. She was invited by her professor, and the trust she felt from her professor to contribute as a professional stuck with her. She felt the strength of the relationship she built with the professor and how great it made her feel to be invited into the conversation. She recalled, "It must have been important to me because I remember her inviting us to say it, and I remember her being

open. I think that's a huge thing, is being open." Her commentary on openness from her colleagues and superiors describes Yvette's desire to form strong and transparent relationships in her work life.

The relationships Yvette built affected her experience at Camp Ignite significantly. Every morning during Camp Ignite, Yvette and other instructors signed in at the front office. The front office was staffed with at least one or two people during sign-in time. The staff greeted each person each morning. Yvette recalled her mornings at Camp Ignite, stating, "That was so validating. It was like, 'Oh, they're glad I'm here.' I don't get that at school." She continued discussing her experience and relationships with Camp Ignite staff, noting, "My greatest takeaway in working with Camp Ignite is how much the staff works together and how much I miss that [in my current job]. You all were a cohesive unit." Yvette felt the impact not only of her relationships with others, but also with the relationships held between other colleagues.

Empowerment. The relationships Yvette built while at Camp Ignite contributed to her feelings of empowerment as an educator. She spoke about how her relationships contributed to her feeling valued as part of the Camp Ignite community. She elaborated and discussed being welcomed each morning by Camp Ignite staff while she signed in. Yvette pointed to being greeted each morning and being told that the staff were glad she was there. She referred to those daily affirmations and said, "One thing that made me feel empowered [at Camp Ignite] is that I was valued."

Yvette also aligned feeling empowered with the freedom she had as an instructor to make decisions. She discussed her professor, Dr. Ingram, and said:

She kind of ran her class the way we kind of ran the centers. She gave us the

freedom to choose [what centers to create and operate], and so it allowed us to

choose and expand on what we wanted to learn about [in the course]. So, it's like

she just said, 'Okay, this is your class. Learn what you wanna learn. I'm here to

help you and guide you. What do you wanna learn?' And it made us all like 'Oh,

this is really cool. We get to learn whatever we wanna learn.' We really dug in

and learned. So, I think I really felt… I guess you could call that empowerment.

The freedom Yvette felt to make professional decisions based on her relationships with

her colleagues led to her feeling empowered as an instructor at Camp Ignite.

When Yvette spoke about her experiences as a whole at Camp Ignite, she kept

using language describing her feelings of empowerment. At one point, she was simple

and concise with her language, simply stating, "I felt effective and free and successful."

She later expanded on those thoughts with detail.

I felt empowered, I felt valued, and I felt like my ideas mattered. Even if it wasn't

everything, we took different bits and pieces of everybody's ideas and we put

them together and we made something great. I felt empowered [at Camp Ignite]

because I felt supported by other people that were in my class.

Yvette's experiences at Camp Ignite left her feeling like a valued member of the

community, like she had strong relationships with her peers and the camp staff, and

ultimately, empowered as an educator.

Richard Oliver

Richard Oliver is a career changer, seasoned in life, but only in his fifth year of

teaching 7th grade English Language Arts at Magnolia Middle School, a two-year site for

Camp Ignite given its proximity to the local university. Before Richard was a teacher, he worked in management. Through restructuring and a budget crisis, Richard's company moved many full-time employees to fewer hours in order to save money on insurance. He struggled with that concept and wondered how to make the lives of his workers better and realized "At the end of my best day, all I've really, really done is to help a company make more money, which I'm not anti-corporate, that's fine. But it wasn't enough for me." The realization that his work was not fulfilling initiated his career change.

Richard comes from a family of teachers. His mother, grandmother, and a handful of aunts are educators. Additionally, at the time of the study, Richard's wife had nearly two decades of experience in public education. When Richard made the decision to pursue a career as a public educator, he had a unique perspective into what it meant to be a public school educator not only because of his previous work experience, but also because of his closeness to the profession via his wife and family. He said:

> I came in because I've grown up around teachers. I've grown up around teachers griping and complaining. I feel like teachers are really good at identifying their stresses and their frustrations. And they're really, really poor at communicating those to the public, so the public can understand, 'Oh, here's where education actually is. And here's how we can maybe help teachers.' Doesn't mean teachers have all the answers, but I do think there's a little bit of a… almost sort of like a military sense or a police brotherhood. Teachers don't talk a whole lot publicly and out loud.

Richard said he seeks to "empower and embolden voices that are otherwise silenced."

The first interview with Richard took place on June 18, 2018, once students and most of the staff of Camp Ignite had left for the day. Richard joined the researcher in an empty classroom, lit only by the light coming through the windows that were slightly obstructed by student projects investigating seed germination. The glaring, fluorescent overhead lights remained off, providing a more relaxed and less clinical setting for the interview. Richard exuded a sense of comfort and openness, as he spoke with the researcher for over two hours.

Freedom in the Structure of Camp. The structure of Camp Ignite loosely mimicked that of a typical school and academic year. Students arrived in the morning and left mid-afternoon. Students were divided into courses with assigned instructors; each class had a set lunchtime. The camp had two co-directors and an administrative staff. However, the similarities in structure between Camp Ignite and a public school during the academic year stopped there.

As team members met and planned for the upcoming summer at Camp Ignite, instructors, donors, interested community members, and other stakeholders were invited to attend and contribute to the conversation. Richard discussed the power of his voice and his opportunity to use his voice as an instructor with Camp Ignite. He recalled:

> I mean even some of the early meetings I was invited to for Camp Ignite, I didn't need to sit in any of those meetings. They did not involve decisions I was making. I appreciated being in those meetings. It provided some perspective. And had I wanted to voice something, I 100% felt that I could voice something.

The opportunity to use his voice and raise concerns if necessary resonated with Richard. He spoke of the flattened hierarchy that existed within Camp Ignite, where those labeled as camp leaders were accessible and approachable.

The researcher asked Richard to discuss a time he wanted to make a change at Camp Ignite. He responded that he had never experienced the need to make a change. He elaborated:

> No, I feel very open. I feel like if there were something that I really wanted, I could just do it or I could just talk to someone about it. I don't feel hindered in any way. Doesn't mean that I would necessarily get what I want, but I feel like it's an open conversation.

Richard noted the smaller class sizes at Camp Ignite allowed him to build relationships with his students and therefore, give each student more individualized attention than in his recent experiences during the academic year. He recalled:

> If I could spend an hour with 12 kids versus 30 kids, the results are going to be different. The one-on-one I can provide as well as the ability to connect learning… my first year [at my school] my largest class was 12 kids, and we had two teachers. It was just working with the most fragile of all learners. And it was all the kids who would sabotage a full class period when they're in a class of 30. And we were very successful with those 12. And they were different students.

Richard related his experience during his first year teaching to his experience at Camp Ignite, where class size positively influenced his opportunity to connect with and reach his students.

Freedom within the System of Camp. Richard described one major difference between Camp Ignite and his work during the academic year as being freedom – the freedom he had from academic standards. While Camp Ignite had an academic focus, there was no instructional calendar created by Richard's superiors that he was held to following. He had the latitude to create his own classes, with their own foci, and could alter the course as needed based on his professional judgment. He gushed:

> Not having to attend to the standards on a… not to be beholden to it to a religious degree is freeing. There are a number of aspects of writing that I haven't covered, but that's okay. I want to see what they do, and then see what we can turn it into. I feel like sometimes when we're going over ELA instruction [during the academic year] we… and maybe it's just something we're doing to ourselves, but we have to assume that they have learned nothing, and so we start from scrap. And the kids get this every single year. It's to just go, "No, we're just going to do this. We're going to look at that."

Richard felt empowered to design his course and use his professional judgment to attend to the needs of his students.

Richard and the researcher discussed empowerment, voice, and his feelings regarding using his voice. He shared:

> No, I don't feel hindered at Camp Ignite [like I do during the academic year]. So, I feel like if there was a big change that I wanted, even if it was structurally a large change, I feel like… not to assume my invitation, but were I to be able to come back next year, that even at the early auspices I could say, "Hey, here's a

thought or concern I have." Doesn't mean that it would be what I want, but I feel

like it would be heard.

Feeling heard, or that being heard was an option, was of utmost importance to Richard as

he described his experiences during both Camp Ignite and the academic year.

The design of Camp Ignite created a safe space for Richard, his colleagues, and

even the students/campers to be heard and validated. The structures put in place by the

leaders of Camp Ignite paved a space for a true flattened hierarchy, where instructors

held authority and were trusted to be professionals. Richard commented,

There was no question that I felt uncomfortable having. And actually, there were

times where I saw students who are struggling or frustrated or who have

difficulties, who were talking directly to whoever, allude to both...to the

individuals who would be at the top of the power structure at Camp Ignite. It

didn't feel heavy, top heavy. It felt like a community where… there are ways we

can talk about making Camp Ignite more impactful, but there were no walls of

communication that I was aware of, either to those who ran it and the teachers, or

those who, or the kids, and those who were in charge. I will say I didn't have a lot

of conversations with those who ran it. I didn't really need to.

Richard described the opportunity to voice his opinions and to make decisions in his class

as empowering. The researcher asked him what his view was of empowerment. He

replied, "I think that empowerment is understanding that and being able to hopefully

sharpen your voice, to be aware of your voice and sharpen it towards stated goals." He

continued, "To a greater degree, empowerment is understanding your community and

understanding what you want your community to be and how your voice can help shape

93

that." The environment, the community that stakeholders built and upheld at Camp Ignite, encouraged teachers and empowered them to make choices and use their voices.

Nina Arnold

All of Nina's 12 years of teaching have been in the same district, the same school, in the same classroom. The consistency of the experience was present through varied parts of her life. Nina, in her early thirties, lived a quiet life focused on her family. She is married, has a small child, and loves her work as a second grade teacher. Nina is from a small town in the southeast, where her father was a college professor. She felt deeply connected to her religious faith and openly discussed it, particularly when it came to prayer. It significantly influenced her decisions and interactions at work. Nina's stance toward people was to assume good will, to assume positive intent. As such, she very openly shared her experiences with the researcher.

Nina met with the researcher one afternoon during mid-June as campers bounded through the hallways at Magnolia Middle School, the site for Camp Ignite that year. Nina came to Camp Ignite by way of her professor, Dr. Naomi English, who happened to be the co-director and visionary of the camp. Nina considered herself a lifelong learner, and as such, was a current student pursuing her education specialist degree. One course provided Nina the opportunity to work with and teach elementary aged students attending Camp Ignite.

Relationships with administrators. Nina's sense of self-efficacy and empowerment were tied to the quality and depth of her relationships with those around her. Particularly, her relationships with her administrators. Nina expressed a comfort and closeness to Naomi, the co-director of Camp Ignite. She said, "She's more like an

instructional coach. She's right there with me the entire time. 'Hey, let's try this. Oh, that's not going to work; let's try this. Have you thought about this?' And then when I get passionate about something, she pulls it out of me and—so it's more like teamwork [at Camp Ignite] rather than this hierarchy that exists in schools. It's more this—a warm hug. A warm hug and a good cup of coffee."

Nina's role at Camp Ignite was that of an instructor but also a graduate student taking a course. In the course, she worked directly with campers and other instructors. In her work with other instructors, she worked as an instructional leader. Nina spoke of her relationship with Naomi – one that has lasted over a decade. Nina, now a graduate student in a course with Naomi, was previously a student of the same faculty member at another university for a prior degree. This history spoke to the long-standing professional relationship between Nina and her professor. She gushed:

> So, for somebody who is in a position of evaluating me, for them to see that potential, and to see something like a diamond in the rough. To see that and to expose that and say, 'Hey, look. Let's work on *this*. Let's build on *this*.' At Camp Ignite, the only person who I'm – and I don't even want to say superior – but my evaluator is my professor.

Nina was aware her evaluator was her professor, but the foundation of that relationship led to the feelings of a flattened hierarchy, where the focus was on the roles of teacher/student, master/apprentice, or mentor/mentee as opposed to strictly being evaluator and the evaluated.

Autonomy and self-efficacy. The researcher asked Nina why she chose to spend time at Camp Ignite over other opportunities and Nina quickly responded, "It was a no

brainer. This is where I knew that I would grow, because I definitely grew as a professional and an educator during Camp Ignite [last summer]. I knew this is where I needed to be." Her choice to participate in Camp Ignite year over year spoke to her self-assessment of being a lifelong learner, where she sought out opportunities to learn and grow.

Camp Ignite provided Nina a space to try things out, a place to let the messiness of learning work itself out without the stressors of the academic year. She exclaimed, "So, at Camp Ignite they bring out these tubs from Math Their Way and I'm like, 'Yes! I actually get to see it!' So, through camp you get to see things or do things that you maybe might not do in the classroom, just because of...just curriculum or just where you are. Also, you just take the risk." Nina had the opportunity to take instructional risks during Camp Ignite because she felt comfortable to do so.

She elaborated on her opportunity to exercise autonomy while teaching and learning at Camp Ignite, noting that she spent one summer at Camp Ignite working through the idea of a Makerspace with her students, and then took that learning and implemented it in her academic year classroom. She noted:

> I got to use that, the idea of Makerspace, research it a little bit more and then play around with it with the kids [at camp] to see what works, what doesn't work, and then last year in my second grade class I was able to incorporate it and feel like I had a sense of "Well, this didn't work, so let's tweak it a little… let's do it a different way."

The freedom to experiment with innovative instructional strategies opened space for Nina to take risks she was too hesitant to pilot during the academic year. As a result,

Nina felt confident from her first round of implementation at Camp Ignite and tried out her ideas with her academic year students. She noted, "I was just able to then have that autonomy of taking risks and able to feel confident enough to explain it to my advisors." This confidence led to feelings of self-efficacy in Nina, which perpetuated a cycle of increased confidence and a means to act with confidence toward her students, peers, and administration.

The autonomy Nina experienced while a graduate student and instructor at Camp Ignite provided more benefits than just a safe space to take risks. After taking such risks with her campers, Nina discussed the academic benefits she noticed while implementing Genius Hour with her campers. She said, "I was reaching so many standards with those kids, and then didn't even know it!" Nina's professionalism as an educator, paired with freedom to experiment proved to be the perfect pair for instructional innovation. She recalled:

> So, when I go into the classroom [this fall], yeah, I can do this because I am meeting XYZ standards, and this is how I can prove it. So, if somebody asks, I now know because of Camp Ignite I tried it out, I got to experiment with it. But then I have the experience… and the knowledge base… and the seasoned teacherness to say, "Okay, I know how to use this" which is good for me!

Because Nina was given space to act autonomously, she granted that space to her students, as well. Just as she chose to implement Genius Hour and a Makerspace in her Camp Ignite classroom, she allowed her students to make choices regarding their specific projects and activities. "I can choose to do these certain things [at Camp Ignite]. And just as the kids enjoyed the choosing [of their projects], so did I… Choice brings about a

sense of autonomy." When the researcher probed Nina regarding her definition of autonomy, she stated, "That I can take risks that I normally wouldn't take within the classroom." This confidence influenced Nina's decisions, her professional relationships, and her feelings toward her work at Camp Ignite. She felt empowered. When asked what empowered her in the workplace, she flatly stated, "I don't know if anything else other than relationships would [empower me]."

For Nina, the key to empowerment was foundational relationships with both her colleagues and her administrators, a somewhat flattened hierarchy within those relationships, and the trust within those relationships to act autonomously to make decisions for the good of her students and classroom.

Lissette Young

Lissette Young is a 28-year-old woman with four years of teaching experience. Teaching is not her first career, but she did make the switch to education early in her career. Lissette completed a bachelor's degree in Spanish and later transitioned into an early childhood education masters and teaching certification program. At the time of this study, she was working on her education specialist degree (Ed.S.). From a family of educators, Lissette was aware of some of the struggles of being an educator, as shared with her by those family members. One of Lissette's passions is working with English learners, which is relevant to her school population, Amsterdam Elementary School, where 40% of students identify as Latinx. Amsterdam ES is part of Magnolia County Public Schools, which is home to Camp Ignite. All of Lissette's teaching career has taken place in the same district, school, and even classroom.

The first interview with Lissette was June 21, 2018, and took place at Magnolia Middle School, the site for Camp Ignite. Lissette met with the researcher after Camp Ignite concluded for the day, near the end of the third week (out of four) of camp. She was tired from the day but expressed excitement for her work as an educator at camp. As Lissette shared a little about her background, she discussed the importance of her Latina heritage in her work, as well as her desire to complete her Ed.S. expeditiously, which at the time of the interview, she planned to be her final degree.

Freedom. Lissette spoke openly about the freedom she felt as part of her experience as an instructor at Camp Ignite. The freedom she was promised, and then realized, was crucial in her decision to join the Camp Ignite staff. Lissette recalled, "Having the flexibility to get to plan our own things without, with having learning in mind but not necessarily bogged down by standards and having a little bit more flexibility… I thought it sounded like a great opportunity."

This freedom initially manifested itself in a conversation with one of the co-directors of the camp regarding the content of her course. Lissette recalled:

> When Naomi asked, "What would we like to do on Tuesday, Thursday mornings," and asked my opinion, I said, "I would really like to spend a lot of time doing hands-on science type learning" because yes, we do it, but we don't have as much time as we would like. You know how that is. Having much more time to do that has been very nice and to have the chance to involve the outdoors too has been really nice. We've involved the garden in our lessons and things. We went on nature walks for insects. Just being able to, I don't know, to go beyond

the classroom has been great, and no – we do not, I do not get to do that in my fourth grade classroom.

Lissette discussed freedom to do extension activities that she typically does not feel she has the time to do and discussed the freedom to plan on her own. She noted, "I feel more empowerment [at camp] as far as having more freedom to plan on my own what I want to do." She cited collaboration, while nice, could sometimes hinder her ability to serve her group of students because collaborative efforts during the school year limit her ability to customize instruction for her classroom. "There's not as much freedom in that you need to stick to the team goal and the team plans, and here, I get to lead the way more with our planning."

Lissette discussed the leadership structure at Camp Ignite. "There was almost this lack of hierarchy at Camp Ignite," noted Lissette. She continued, "That's the big one. That's the big piece." Because Lissette was in a leadership position at camp, and because the leadership that existed at Camp Ignite was designed with a flattened hierarchy, Lissette had the autonomy, feelings of self-efficacy, opportunity to act agentically, and the empowerment to take advantage of the freedom granted to her to make decisions that she felt was best for her students. "I'm the team leader so my role is, I'm the one that's supposed to lead and I'm not a team leader [during the school year], so I think that's why I feel more empowerment [at Camp Ignite]." Camp Ignite highlighted Lissette's capacity for leadership, and she felt positively impacted by that opportunity.

In addition to the freedom to plan, Lissette shared the overall freedom she felt by being part of the Camp Ignite faculty. She felt freed from "the pressures of testing and things like that" during Camp Ignite. Lissette noted that during the school year "I feel

very pressured and stressed. I mean, what teacher doesn't?" She elaborated that she needed to feel the weight lifted and divulged, "I needed this feeling of being renewed, as far as not letting those pressures get to me, and being reminded of what learning can be… it's what I needed after four years [of teaching]." Lissette made a point to mention that the structure of camp empowered her, but that it was not strictly because the context was a summer camp. She discussed how Camp Ignite was "different." She said:

> …but I know it's not just because it's a summer program whatsoever. It's the way that it was structured from the beginning, the vision that the people, whoever led the way in creating this, it's clear what their vision was here.

That vision left Lissette feeling a sense of freedom and empowerment in her teaching that she had not experienced during the academic school year. The freedom Lissette felt carried through when she faced challenges in the classroom at Camp Ignite:

> If there's even a second of challenge, you have the room to automatically just approach that challenge and take care of it. I really don't feel that there have been many challenges here, because we are able to plan lessons about things that we want to. And we are able to, I don't know… what do I want to say? I don't walk away every day thinking about challenges the way that I do during the school year.

The freedom granted to Camp Ignite instructors reframed Lissette's experience as a teacher, where she focused on the positive rather than the challenging or negative.

Voice. In addition to feeling a sense of freedom at Camp Ignite, Lissette discussed the importance of feeling her voice, as an educator, was heard. When asked if having her voice heard was important to who she was as an educator, Lissette agreed. She also

agreed that having her voice heard positively influenced her self-efficacy. Being able to use her voice and feel listened to was vital to Lissette's identity as a teacher. She described herself as "one of those teachers that's really passionate and very vocal about things," so when she was part of Camp Ignite, she felt people listened to her. She mentioned, "Someone finally listened. That's what's important. So, I'm glad to see that I was able to drive some change. That was a great feeling."

Lissette connected being able to voice her professional opinions in her classroom with being empowered at Camp Ignite:

> I define empowerment as being able to make decisions for your classroom, as a teacher, that are supported by people higher than you… decisions that you feel are best for your particular learners in your classroom, their needs. Being able to make decisions about instructional strategies and methods and ways that you want to go about getting to those learning goals.

Lissette's view of empowerment supports the researcher's definition, as one that includes a desire for autonomy and to exercise agency as she saw fit in her classroom, resulting in self-efficacy. To use her voice in her classroom left Lissette feeling empowered, and "renewed," as she put it.

Annie Nelson

Annie is a person of great passion. The way she spoke about her life, her experience, and her career drew in the researcher. At the time of the study, Annie was the media specialist at Magnolia Middle School, but prior to that position she had several significant life experiences. To hear her tell it, "I did a lot of other things before I went into education. I was 28 before I graduated with my undergrad degree, so I tried out

several other careers, and it wasn't my intention to ever be a teacher." Annie, in her 40s, considered herself a people person with a short attention span, and she expected to end up with a career in sales as opposed to education. When asked what kept her in education, she noted that it was challenging and kept her engaged.

The researcher and Annie met officially for the first time on June 27, 2018. The participant rescheduled the interview from a few days prior and the atmosphere was hectic, as camp was ending for the season just two days later.

Autonomy. Annie presented with a matter of fact attitude that was direct but kind. She considered her time at Camp Ignite and weighed her experience against what she supposed the experience might be like for some of her colleagues. She noted, "The freedom of it I think could have been scary for people, to say, create a curriculum for this class and then really there's no parameters except you're supposed to explore agriculture." Working as an instructor at Camp Ignite provided an opportunity for Annie not only to share her passions with middle school students outside of the traditional school year but also in a way that supported curiosity.

The parameters set forth by the Camp Ignite Planning Committee, a team composed of stakeholders representing a range of community interests, could be inspiring for some yet daunting for others. Annie relied on her experience to support her work in a free-flowing environment but remained reflective about and aware of the potential impact on those with less experience in education. She considered the concept of autonomy in her work as an educator:

> The idea of freedom can be very freeing to someone [like me] who's had a lot of
> experience working with middle schoolers and feels comfortable with that portion

of it, but for someone who doesn't [have the experience and comfort] it can be overwhelming.

Annie embraced the autonomy granted her by Camp Ignite leadership, and as a result, thrived at camp.

Annie noted, however, that freedom also came with responsibility. She was aware that she was free to teach what and how she thought appropriate for her students at Camp Ignite, as long as she maintained a focus agreed upon with Naomi, the camp co-director, and kept the goals of the program in mind:

> I felt like [she] gave us a lot of freedom to do whatever when she told me about the opportunity with Camp Ignite. She talked about how the district hopes that we will work with literacy and numeracy and social and emotional development, which ours was all about, right? I think they support it by giving you the freedom to kinda choose what you're gonna teach, or how you're gonna teach it, as long as you're within the parameters of the things that the district wants us to accomplish. I mean, those are really broad goals, like, you can pretty much support literacy, and numeracy, and social and emotional learning with everything.

Annie saw the opportunity to act autonomously and maintain the mission of Camp Ignite as intertwined, and therefore felt empowered in her work.

Connections. In addition to the autonomy she felt to make decisions around her courses and instruction, Annie noted how her experience at Camp Ignite built, strengthened, and/or highlighted connections with various community members. Annie spoke specifically about the connections she made with university partners, as Camp Ignite was born from the official partnership between Magnolia County Public Schools

and Weagle University. She mentioned she enjoyed the connections made and that she hoped they would "continue on through" beyond the days of camp.

The connections, and therefore relationships, Annie formed with Camp Ignite stakeholders resulted in her feeling empowered as an educator, specifically as it related to the choices she made in books to share with her students at camp. She explained:

That's an important one because they're just going to… we had freedom to select whatever text we wanted to use and – and [other media specialists] were talking about how lucky I was to be able to make the choices of the books that I booktalk here, like, as in if you were in another school or another place, you know, somebody might come down on you for that. I thought, well, that's good, but like… I was really focused on making sure that we had really diverse books and the idea…but just being intentional with the kids about talking about diversity…

Annie made intentional decisions to select books that were inclusive – books that told the stories of children and people that were as diverse as her student population at Magnolia Middle. She knew because of the trust formed through her connections with Camp Ignite leadership that she could choose to include texts that some considered controversial to assist in providing representation for the students she taught. Annie felt empowered to make professional decisions she felt were best for kids.

Mollie Ingalls

Mollie was bright, bubbly, and full of horsepower. She was a lot of energy packed into a small package. She stood around five feet tall but had a much larger presence. With audible app chimes on her phone, she announced what was happening throughout her interview, be it an interesting news alert that she shared out with excitement, or

something she found less intriguing, like the weather. She spoke so quickly she sometimes tripped over her own tongue and had to go back and rethink or restate her words, which provided a challenge to the researcher during interview transcription.

When Mollie first met with the researcher, camp was bustling. It was the final afternoon session before the last day of camp celebration. Finding a quiet place to hide away and talk was not easy, and multiple interruptions slowed down the cadence of the interview. Mollie was a fast talker and managed the variety of disruptions well. As she came from a family of educators, that sort of focus could have been learned from watching or listening to her educator family members. Both of her parents were teachers, as was one sister, one brother-in-law, and a younger sister was about to start teaching. She was one of five children, in the middle.

At the time of the first interview, Mollie had just completed her 8th year teaching. She had spent time in the same general geographic region but had moved through a series of districts and schools. She was waiting to learn what her position would be for the next school year. She shared it was one of three options, and she was upbeat about the possibilities. She noted she would learn the school's finalized instructional plan roughly two weeks prior to heading back to school in the fall.

Autonomy. As Mollie reflected on her time at Camp Ignite, she frequently discussed her autonomy. With only a small set of parameters, Mollie felt the freedom and flexibility to make decisions for the group of campers with whom she worked. As a graduate student, Mollie was part of a course that focused on the importance of play for young students. She noted, "Dr. Ingram has really been kind of letting us take the lead of how we want to structure everything." The "everything" Mollie referred to was truly,

106

nearly everything. Mollie and her classmates were given a start time, an end time, and a lunchtime by which to abide, and the rest was up to Mollie and the other teachers as to how their work with the campers would look. She continued, "Everything else is more at your discretion in what works best for you and the group of kids that you have, because they act really different in the morning, probably, than they do in the afternoon."

The autonomy Mollie felt provided her with the space to "try out things that you wouldn't normally get to do in a school year or things that you wanted to try out but you want to kind of tweak it and see what works." Mollie felt the structure she experienced supported her empowerment as an educator. Because there was such a great degree of, what she referred to as, flexibility, Mollie not only designed her sessions for campers to spend more time in centers than she would during the academic year, but she also let the campers pick their own centers as opposed to assigning students to centers. She elaborated on the autonomy she experienced:

> You kind of pretty much have free will or design over how you want to run it. Like, it's not set guidelines… you have those set times, but you get to… they let you tweak things. Like, if it doesn't work out, you're not set in stone like "Oh, it has to be this way." You're able to [say] "That didn't work, let's try something different."

Mollie felt the freedom to design her course in such a way as to try new and innovative pedagogical practices, the freedom to make course-corrections as necessary, and the confidence to pass some autonomy to her students, too.

Lack of pressure. Camp Ignite was a place for students to discover, inquire, voice their opinions, and explore the world around them. Subsequently, it was the same

for many of the teachers, graduate students, and university faculty working with camp. Mollie felt a lack of pressure from the leadership at Camp Ignite to do anything other than what she felt was best for kids. She shared her thought process with the researcher, "Just try it out. If it works, great! Keep going. [If it] doesn't work? Then, okay, back to the drawing board [and] figure out something different." And she did just that.

The lack of pressure Mollie experienced was partially due to the relaxed nature of the summer camp, where teachers were not beholden to strict academic standards, aggressive pacing calendars, and high-stakes accountability testing. The autonomy Mollie felt amplified the lack of pressure and propelled her to step outside of her comfort zone as she designed her class and made instructional decisions. Mollie spoke about the opportunities Camp Ignite made possible for her academic year students. She bubbled:

It's a great way to… for my class, do a lot. Like, you are able to, like I said, change things up. It wasn't like it's… you're able to play around with the kids and say, "Oh, this works here. Would that work in a mainstream classroom during the school year?" And so far, I think yes, the things that I've seen would work, which is nice because you can kinda… like a trial run.

Mollie noted that lack of pressure on both teachers and campers at Camp Ignite allowed them to flourish.

She was able to try new pedagogical practices – with success – that she was too fearful to attempt during the school year in the event they were not successful. She referred to the flexible structure and noted, "That is, the flexibility in letting us take a chance, to see if it works, or if it doesn't work. It's not like it's a 'you gotta do this, this and this." However, she allowed her instincts regarding what was best for students to

guide her rather than the fear of falling behind or failing. She engaged her students and did so in new and exciting ways.

Rita Roberts

When Rita entered the room, her presence was palpable. She spoke with confidence but maintained an affable quality. Her eyes were bright, her smile was broad, and she looked directly into the eyes of the researcher as she eagerly shared her perspectives. In her three years of teaching, Rita worked in substantially different environments. She did not hold back as she shared the details of her experience in both life and teaching. Rita spoke with great passion, as she was someone who fully invested in whatever task she took on. The daughter of a teacher, she knew the life of being an educator well. In addition to teaching, she spent her first three years in the profession obtaining her master's degree, beginning her Ed.S., and coaching volleyball.

The first interview with Rita was just past the midpoint of Camp Ignite. Rita worked with the students in grades three through five. That grade band had a significant number of university students working together as co-instructors, so the camp directors divided the grade level leaders into AM (morning) and PM (afternoon) groups. Rita worked in the morning group and met with the researcher after lunch. Camp was bustling about, so Rita and the researcher met in the camp supply room – a classroom designated to house the plethora of supplies that were necessary to keep Camp Ignite running smoothly. The room was at the top of the wing designated to Camp Ignite, so there was a moderate amount of traffic in and out of the room during the interview. Rita appeared unbothered by the interruptions and brightly shared her story.

Autonomy. Rita reflected on her time working at Camp Ignite and recalled Naomi telling her, "You're in charge when you're there." The teachers at Camp Ignite were given the autonomy to select both curricular topics and pedagogical strategies they felt were best for their students. Initially, the trust Rita felt from the Camp Ignite leadership coupled with the endless options of what and how to teach, she felt overwhelmed, but she quickly overcame those feelings:

> When Naomi said, "Just let me know what you want to do," I didn't know what to do. Naomi was like, "You choose." And I was like, "Choose what? I don't know how to choose!" And so, it took me a while to be like, "What do I enjoy teaching and I want to bring into Camp Ignite?" So that was like STEM activities. I love hands-on STEM activities. So that was our first step when I was talking with Naomi, was the power to choose.

Rita felt strongly about the power to choose.

Rita taught and designed the curriculum for the rising 3rd-5th grade group at Camp Ignite with several graduate students. While she felt the autonomy provided to her by Camp Ignite leadership, she also recognized camp was still an academically-minded environment. She described the process of building the summer curriculum:

> What we've done this year is focus on Magnolia and that included like mapping Magnolia, animals of Magnolia, the water of Magnolia. So, still structured, still lesson planning, still expectations. But we didn't have to follow standards, and I like that. It would've been hard to follow standards anyway. When you have three to five, would you pick third grade? Would you pick fifth grade? Would you pick a mixture? I'm sure if I tried hard enough all of the activities could've fit a

110

standard; it's not that hard. But I like the freedom of just being able to find a topic

to focus on, not "We have to get this done." So, I really liked that we chose

"Diving into Magnolia" and that we've kind of just picked apart what's in

Magnolia. And then we've done things with technology – just like my classroom.

We've done arts and crafts – just like my classroom. It's not too different [from

my classroom] except for, I'm not as strict. Obviously.

Rita noted the processes and procedures for running her classroom at Camp Ignite were

similar to her academic year classroom but slightly more relaxed due to the lack of

pressure of standardized testing and pacing calendars.

The "power to choose," as Rita referred to the opportunity to exercise autonomy,

was not limited to the initial set up of the session she co-taught at Camp Ignite. She knew

she had the flexibility to make changes along the way, as well. Because she was not

beholden to pacing, she was able to try things out, observe, and revise as necessary. She

noted, "I get to [teach] however I want and if it doesn't go well, it's okay. If it doesn't get

done, it's okay. We've bumped all our lessons back in three through five because some

just took longer." The autonomy Rita felt empowered her to make necessary changes in

the moment without fear of consequences.

While considering her time at Camp Ignite in 2018, Rita also reflected on her time

at camp the two previous summers. The summer of the first interview was Rita's third

consecutive summer with Camp Ignite. One theme Rita noticed across all of her summers

spent at Camp Ignite was the commitment from both Camp Ignite leadership and her

course professors to be able to make choices about the instruction, and therefore, the

experience at camp. "Same with the play class. We had the empowerment to do whatever

we wanted. Dr. Bill was very open to 'You pick your stations. You run it the way you want to' because every class was focusing on different data, so we even got to pick what we wanted to focus on."

Rita expressed that autonomy was not only granted to her during her time at Camp Ignite, but in all of her graduate coursework at Weagle University:

I've had a lot of professors to say, "If you don't want to do it this way, let me know how you want to do it, and we'll figure it out." And that's what I like about Weagle University, is a lot of teachers say that.

The impact of being trusted to make choices for her students and to make choices for herself as a graduate student resonated with Rita. She noted, "I'm more willing to ask questions like, 'Can I try this? What would happen if I did this? Can I change this?' and [the professors have] always said 'Yes.'" Rita continued, explaining how her professors (and likewise, Camp Ignite leadership) held the mindset "Just prove you're doing it for a good reason and that you're learning something out of it. Even if you learned what not to do, at least you are learning something from it."

Ultimately, Rita realized that "Anytime I was [at Camp Ignite], I felt like I was able to do what I felt was right for the kids." Rita saw that modeled for her each summer at Camp Ignite and took that experience with her into the classroom that fall, recalling:

But I've had a lot of professors, too, that say, "If you don't want to do it this way, let me know how you want to do it and we'll figure it out." And that's what I like about Weagle University, is a lot of teachers say that. And so, why can't we start that in fifth grade? You don't want it this way? Let's figure out how you want to

do it. If you want to type it, if you want to write it, if you want to draw it, if you want to video tape it, then we can figure it out.

Relationships. Rita described a level of comfort with her supervisors, teachers, and professors at Camp Ignite that made them feel like family to her. When asked if she felt comfortable speaking up to make needed changes, she said:

To Naomi, definitely. Yeah, just because I've known her for a long time and that's my advisor on that. So again, we were just talking outside, like, how great the Weagle University professors are because they meet you at the coffee shop, that you go to their house, that they come to your house. It's just like a big family.

Coupled with autonomy, Rita's relationships with the leadership at Camp Ignite built her confidence. She felt trusted to make decisions, noting she was "given the power to do whatever I thought within parameters" as long as she did not "do something ridiculous." Her relationships with the leadership built the foundation for her to know what would and would not be considered "something ridiculous," so she could rely on her professional judgment to be sure she was aligned with Camp Ignite's core values. Because Camp Ignite leadership treated Rita professionally, she had the opportunity to act professionally, reap the rewards of the mutually beneficial relationship at hand, and ultimately, feel empowered.

Mae Evans

The first of Mae's interviews was on a bright afternoon during the last week of camp. When Mae Evans met the researcher to discuss her experiences as an educator, she smiled softly. The warmth of her demeanor filled the room while she spoke carefully, yet pointedly, with the researcher. Mae spoke with a soft and slightly restrained excitement,

carefully choosing her words. The care though, was not out of caution, but instead, a thoughtful practice of Mae's to ensure each word she spoke carried the meaning she intended. At the time of the interview, she had just finished her 41st year in education and projected a quiet confidence when she claimed a pseudonym was not necessary (but was used) for her to participate in the study.

Mae's time as an educator was diverse, with 29 years teaching in private Christian schools and 12 years in public schools. Having taught a variety of subjects from high school history, English, speech – "a lot of things" according to Mae – and first through third grade, dual language immersion classes, and time as a paraprofessional, as well – Mae had vast experience. Prior to her move to public education, she pursued her masters and certification in 2010, as her bachelor's degree was in Dramatic Production. Always a learner, Mae was pursuing her education specialist degree during data collection, and at the time of study completion, Mae was a doctoral student.

Relationships. As Mae discussed her experiences at Camp Ignite, one focus was the flattened hierarchy. Mae noticed and commented on the accessibility of the co-directors of camp, saying, "Approachable, just approachable… they always responded. They always took care of things. They respected you. I think it's a big part of why they are successful." The directors of Camp Ignite built relationships with their stakeholders, and Mae felt comfortable going to them with any concerns. Mae discussed the relationships and how she felt as a result of those relationships:

I'm in this direction where I'm empowered – or you can pull me over here to

where I know you're the power and I know that I'm not a partner in this. Whereas

114

here, I can feel like I'm a partner in this. You really respect my opinion, you

know, you really trust me.

At Camp Ignite, even though she was not on the leadership team, Mae knew she was

partnering – collaborating – with the leaders to design and implement a thoughtful and

high quality experience for her student campers.

The relationships Mae built and maintained with her Camp Ignite colleagues

made for a more collaborative environment. Mae not only felt in partnership with the

leadership of Camp Ignite, but also with the professor teaching the course she was taking:

It's more collaborative [at Camp Ignite] because I can be… I come in with some

things, but Dr. Ingram might say something, and that will switch it. Or put us on

another path. And I think we are more relaxed, and I think we are talking about

more important things.

The relationships opened opportunities for Mae to have deeper, more meaningful

conversations with her colleagues, and therefore, feel more effective and impactful in her

work.

The environment maintained at Camp Ignite boosted Mae's confidence. "People

have confidence in you because people know you," she noted. Mae felt less restrained

because she knew she was not being evaluated using the [state's teacher evaluation]

system – even though she was being evaluated in her work as a graduate student. Mae

continued, "I think people, they've gotten to know you and they trust that you're gonna

do the right thing, and they trust if you need help, you're gonna ask for it." The

relationships cultivated at Camp Ignite were key to Mae's feelings of self-efficacy, and

ultimately, her experience as an instructor.

Autonomy. When it comes to how summer days are spent by teachers, the days beyond the bounds and obligations of the standard school year, teachers generally have control over where and how they spend their time, save for sometimes mandatory summer professional learning. When the researcher asked Mae why she chose to spend her time at Camp Ignite as opposed to another opportunity, or relaxing, she responded:

> Every teacher needs an experience like this to see that it's… Because when you go back to the data world, you can carry the hope with you. That there is learning that can still go on, and I need to take that hope with me. And even if it's just small changes, I can make them.

When the researcher probed to learn more about what Mae meant, she noted that Camp Ignite is "a deviation from the norm, and it's a good thing." Mae continued by discussing how Camp Ignite provided her a significant level of freedom. Mae felt the freedom to slow down with her students at camp, felt the freedom to study something "in-depth over a period of time and not have any sort of parameters around it."

Additionally, Mae felt freedom to take risks as a graduate student, to try out new things in a low risk environment, as there were no pacing guides or high stakes tests at the end of camp. Mae noted, "I saw the freedom of [camp] and I thought, 'Wow, that would be really cool to be able to work with Camp Ignite [again] this summer and do something else,'" as Mae was a returning Camp Ignite instructor/graduate student.

For Mae, the concept of freedom and autonomy meant "the ability to choose and then just to take responsibility for what you have chosen." Mae took this notion to heart, and noted that when her professor told her she would not only be making the decisions, but also acting on those decisions by teaching the class during camp, she thought, "Oh

okay, so what are we gonna do here?" as she prepared to teach high school students about being an educator. Mae continued:

> But it's just – you can choose. *You* can *choose*. And there are a variety of things I probably could have chosen; somebody else might have chosen different things… I don't think there are any challenges, other than just challenging yourself to do your very best for the kids, because I know I have a freedom. And I will get feedback on what I am doing, which I expect… but it's just freedom.

Mae's inspiration from the expectation to act autonomously outweighed any potential pressure associated with the weight of making decisions. She felt supported by her professor and the Camp Ignite staff because she felt like a "partner" in camp. The way the co-directors structured camp provided Mae with opportunities to build relationships, act autonomously, and feel empowered.

Individual Perspectives of Experiences During the Academic Year

The researcher captured the majority of the data analyzed in the following section during the second of two semi-structured interviews and through participant journals. The following section includes individual perspectives from each case about the teacher's experience as an instructor during the academic year and answers the second research question: How do K-12 teachers compare their experience as instructors in a summer learning program to their experiences during the academic year? The perspectives of each participant reflect the differences of each participant's school year context, while still containing similarities. The descriptions provide an accurate account of each participant's perspectives regarding his or her experience as an academic year teacher.

117

Yvette Landon

The second interview with Yvette was the first interview in a series of follow-up interviews with all participants. It occurred November 9, 2018 at the same public library as her first interview. She kept a journal at the request of the researcher; however, she asked to complete hers on paper as opposed to the Google Doc shared by the researcher. She was concerned about her school administration accessing her journal and thereby, becoming a victim of retaliatory action. Through emails to schedule the follow-up interview, she wrote to the researcher and asked, "Also, regarding the journal, would you mind if I kept a handwritten journal? It has to do with Wi-Fi usage and confidentiality at school, which is, oddly enough, related to teacher empowerment or lack thereof. Many thanks." Yvette gave the researcher her handwritten journal as soon as the two entered the room at the public library. Her use of script and a yellow legal pad were a nod to her generation, as she was on the cusp between being a Baby Boomer and part of Generation X.

Fear and Relationships. The leadership in Yvette's school underwent significant changes during the last few school years prior to the study. A new administration arrived and shook the comfort of Yvette and her colleagues in a school where many were employed for a decade or more. Reflecting on the arrival of the new headmaster, Yvette exclaimed, "[A]nd then [he] comes in and says, 'I'm in charge now.' And immediately started taking away privileges." She continued, "A lot has gone on. He started making changes where he fired a lot of support staff."

Yvette expressed feelings of worry and fear as she recounted the number of teachers who had been terminated since the arrival of the new headmaster:

Our most awesome high school teachers were fired. Sally Gilmore. She has so many kids. She was math; she's the math department head. She had so many kids passing the AP, everything at Weagle University with math. She's an awesome teacher. All four of my kids had her. Wonderful. Fired. Amy Sneed. AP Lang. These kids that she put out, they would get fives on these AP tests. This woman could teach. Gone.

She continued by telling the researcher about additional instances of reputable teachers at her school whom she believed to be fired without cause.

The fear Yvette felt reflected the lack of relationship she had with her headmaster. She recalled an evening at a sporting event where she, her husband, and one of her children met the headmaster for the first time. Yvette introduced herself and her family members and felt blown off by the headmaster. She described him as distant and disinterested. Similarly, one day the headmaster brought an observer to Yvette's classroom:

He came in one time before I really realized what he was doing, and he brought a man in to see [my classroom]. And I said "Oh, hello. I'm Yvette Landon. It's nice to meet you," and the headmaster said to me in front of this guy with all these children here, "He's not here to meet you. He's here to see your classroom. You don't need to say hello to him."

Yvette described the lack of relationship with her administration as a wholly negative experience. "I feel kinda worthless in their eyes," she said. "I feel replaceable. I feel worthless. I feel powerless."

When the researcher probed Yvette about her feelings regarding her value and worth, Yvette cried:

> 'Cause I'm afraid I'll show up one day, and I'll just be fired. And he won't even tell us we're fired. He says things like "We're just not gonna see eye to eye." He won't even say the words, "You're fired; you're terminated." He'll say, "We don't have a place for you anymore."

Yvette spent several minutes describing how other teachers and even administrators had been let go with no notice or explanation, all contributing to her fear of being fired.

The fear and distrust Yvette felt in her school were amplified by paranoia and anxiety. When the researcher scheduled the interviews with Yvette, Yvette was determined to meet anywhere other than her school building. She said, "They put up new cameras everywhere and I'm pretty sure that somebody's listening to me over the intercom all the time." She then qualified her statement and added, "I don't mind if they put a camera in my classroom. I don't mind if they put audio. But I want to know about it. I just think that's fair." At a different time during her interviews, she added, "I think they're listening to us in our rooms."

One of Yvette's fears at school was that pursuing an advanced degree would make her a target to be fired. She described the headmaster as hiring people who would be his "puppets" and hiring new, moldable teachers who did not have experience to measure against. Regarding higher education, she expressed worry and noted, "I feel like every time I make the trek to Weagle University, I just become more and more dangerous to him because I have a brain. I know one of these days he's going to fire me." Yvette elaborated:

I'm worried for myself, for my job, simply because he knows I'm getting my

master's degree, and he knows I want to get a PhD, and that's bad. Because the

more educated I become, I know more… This is my take. Nobody's told me this.

I feel like it puts a target on my back because I'm not willing to sit there and let

somebody without a[n education] degree tell me…

Despite these fears, Yvette continued to go to work each day, as one of her children was

still a student in her school, and she worried about what might happen to him without her

there. At the completion of the study, Yvette was pursuing her PhD.

The disconnection and lack of relationships Yvette felt with her school colleagues

left her holding her breath as to what might happen next:

At school now, I don't feel like the administration cares that any of us are there,

or me particularly. They don't care that I'm there. I'm very replaceable, and he

does not value my ideas. Because I've seen so many people get the rug just pulled

right out from under them, I know I could be next.

She felt comfort, though, in speaking with the researcher and expressing her feelings. She

sighed and said, "This is partly why I'm so glad to talk to you, because I can't tell

anybody anything because they'll take it out on [my child], and then they'll fire me." Her

interviews were punctuated by tears, hugs, and thanks to the researcher, as the

conversations felt "like free therapy" for Yvette.

Empowerment. Yvette discussed her feelings of empowerment and lack thereof

during the academic year. In some ways, she felt controlled and disempowered at her

school. She noted, "They dictate weird things, like, this is the new guy. We are required

to be out in the hallway so many minutes every day. Yeah, I mean, weird stuff like that."

However, she elaborated that what she taught was not "dictated" to her, noting, "Like, as far as curriculum, I don't think he has any idea what I teach. He has no clue," referring to her headmaster.

Yvette spoke about the opportunities afforded to her at Camp Ignite and related them to her freedom in her classroom:

And I feel like the eggshell… Camp Ignite, for me, was you take a hardboiled egg and you start cracking it. I feel like the egg is cracking for me, and I'm pulling off little bits at a time. And I have the freedom to pull those bits off [during the academic year] because my headmaster… I could be teaching *anything* in there, and he wouldn't care as long as the school is all neat and pretty. He doesn't care what we teach. And that's disheartening.

For Yvette, freedom to select curriculum, teaching strategies, and assignments in her classroom did not equate to feeling empowered. In fact, she mentioned feeling disempowered multiple times during interviews, calling her headmaster a "dictator" and added "he's very controlling." She elaborated, noting the difficulties she faced going to work, "It's hard because all power has been taken from the teachers. All power has been taken, all consideration has been taken."

Yvette continued to discuss her lack of power at length and expressed feeling a lack of value as part of her school's faculty as she pursued higher education. She described her experience in the following manner:

I feel completely powerless at school because I feel like the more educated I get at Weagle University, the less they want to hear from me because me being educated makes me… powerful. Yes. And they don't want that. [The headmaster] wants

122

people… he wants young, new teachers who don't have enough experience and who don't have higher degrees, because he wants to run it the way he wants to run it."

Yvette's experience at school actively defied her definition of empowerment, which was "allowing the educator to use what she has learned in college in undergraduate, in graduate whatever work. And use that to reach the goals she needs to reach in the classroom, whatever those goals are." Pursuing her master's degree and eventually her PhD, both which Yvette described as empowering experiences, were contributing to her regular disempowerment during the academic year, as she felt pursuing education made her a threat in the eyes of her headmaster.

While Yvette felt freedom to choose her curriculum, she felt actively disempowered on a regular basis by her administration. At her school, Yvette felt the roles of administrators and teachers were not clear nor traditional, and lamented the hiring of people into teaching roles without teaching degrees as well as the hiring of administrators without teaching degrees. Yvette elaborated how the circumstances in her school left her feeling disempowered, "I think the lack or the blurring of boundaries is one thing that's caused us to not be empowered. We are not empowered at our school right now." The researcher asked Yvette if the blurring of boundaries in addition to the firings of her colleagues – seemingly without cause – left her wondering if one day she might be called into an administrator's office and not allowed back. Yvette confirmed, stating, "That's exactly what it is, yes. That's exactly what it feels like." While Yvette felt she could act autonomously within the walls of her classroom, she felt constrained

and controlled by her headmaster. These feelings, coupled with the lack of relationship she felt with her administrators, actively led to Yvette's disempowerment.

Richard Oliver

Richard met with the researcher in his classroom for his follow-up interview, which took place on November 12, 2018. It was a cool fall evening, and much of the daylight had already faded when the interview began at 5:00 PM. The halls of the school were empty, save a few custodians and teachers preparing for the next day of work. This time, Richard was dressed for work, and his tie peeked out from beneath his scruffy beard. The researcher offered Richard a bag of leftover Halloween candy and a bottle of water, a small token for his time. Initially, he denied the water but immediately had a piece of chocolate.

Much like in his initial interview, Richard spoke plainly about his experiences and his opinions. His second interview was an hour and forty minutes – just over a half hour shorter than his initial interview. Unlike six of the eight participants, Richard did not keep a journal as requested by the researcher, but this decision did not minimize the content Richard shared during the interview.

Frustration with structure. The topic of frustration dominated Richard's responses to the researcher's questions. He spoke explicitly about programs being introduced and expressed feelings of being overwhelmed. He exclaimed:

I feel like we're doing a lot of new initiatives, a lot of new things without actually really supporting or backing those things up. I know that I feel frustrated just in terms of the number of things that are being placed upon me.

124

Richard called out programs and initiatives by name and remarked that his attention was divided across them. The amount of time required by the sum of the initiatives left Richard feeling inadequate. He was unable to find success, so he prioritized one initiative over another, which made him feel like he was coerced into choosing where to attempt successful implementation and where to accept failure. Richard elaborated:

> I'm choosing what I'm failing to accomplish. But I'm disappointed with having to make that choice in a pretty severe way. But I could speak to it if challenged in terms of why you're not doing this or that. I'll speak to it, and I'll explain why I'm making the decisions I'm making. But I feel like the district's buying very expensive and potentially very effective tools but not really giving me the time or resources to make use of it. And that's where my frustration is coming from. I'm not really interested in one more initiative. And I know also that's just part of teaching, too, but that's also why you have a lot of teachers who stopped pretending or trying to buy into the next thing, just because it really feels like an infomercial each year when they go through, here's the different products that have been purchased.

While Richard was frustrated with the way new initiatives were introduced, he was more bothered by the fact that the initiatives were unsupported by the structures in place in his building, where he did not have the time nor the training to implement said initiatives with fidelity.

In addition to his frustration with the lack of support for school-wide and district-wide initiatives, Richard also expressed frustration with the deficit perspective adopted by his superiors toward his students, particularly students living in poverty and students

of color. His passion for the population whom he taught drove his daily decisions. Richard waited four years to secure a teaching job in his district because his passion for the community was so strong. Richard noticed an inequity in the number of children of color who were identified for the gifted and talented program in his district. He noted the perspective of the district was one where "The fact that there is a smaller number of children of color perhaps means we should simply stop identifying," and left him feeling irritated with the efforts of his school district. He noted:

> I have a problem with that versus let's look at alternative methods. Let's look at what other states are doing. Let's look at opening that opportunity versus closing it. The conversation is, I feel more and more district-wide moving towards maybe it doesn't serve our kids to do that.

Richard was exasperated with a structure to identify gifted students that did not serve his students, and when it was identified that the structure was not working, the district moved to delete the structure rather than to amend it.

In addition to the lack of ways to identify children of color and children living in poverty for accelerated programs such as the gifted and talented program, Richard noted a general deficit perspective towards the abilities of his students, regardless of their identification for any program. "I do have frustration that there's a push against doing novels" he said. Richard discussed the school's push against novel studies with his students, as the students were not likely to finish a novel given their background, according to the school. Rather than building supports to scaffold for students to complete a novel study, Richard shared the school's perspective to do away with them completely rather than alter the structure in place for novel studies.

Conversely, Camp Ignite students were encouraged to engage in novel studies. Camp Ignite dedicated funds to purchase small sets of various novels to encourage students not only to read them, but to also select a novel of interest and then become part of a literature circle studying that novel. Rather than saying no, Camp Ignite told students yes. The contrast between the contexts where Richard worked left him feeling discouraged and disempowered.

Frustration with the system. Richard's frustrations extended beyond the structures in place in his school and district. He felt frustrated with the entirety of the system and the profession, as it existed. The consistent overwork, the lack of support for his students, and the inability to voice his opinions within the system hindered his ability to make change within the structures. Richard spoke for himself and for his colleagues. He stated:

> I don't know many happy teachers who are happy with the profession. I don't
> know that I've ever had a conversation with teachers where the majority of the
> focus is on being happy and content with the work. Content with the workload.
> Content with how they're heard. And the opportunity to make changes, and
> maybe it's just the people that I talk to, but I don't think that's ever been a
> grounding point to any of my conversations with teachers.

Richard noted that the discontentment of teachers, specifically in his district, led not only to teachers leaving in droves, but also the district's being unable to replace them.

The loss of teachers in the district concerned Richard, and the way the superintendent addressed that loss was equally concerning and frustrating:

Our district lost, I think it's like 219 [teachers] total. It was an extraordinary amount of teachers [who] left Magnolia County last year, to which the superintendent said that he wants to start tracking the number we have leave…but he wants to use last year's number, which is not the norm as our baseline, which is troubling to me.

Richard's concern with teachers leaving spoke to his desire to support the population of his school. One scenario he described as particularly alarming was his school's inability to replace a special education teacher, which, at the time of his interview, resulted in some students at his school not being served. "So, those kids just aren't getting SPED support" claimed Richard bluntly.

Given Richard's familial exposure to the day-to-day life of educators, he entered the profession expecting a certain level of frustration:

I probably entered teaching in some ways from absolutely the right perspective, in some ways from a horrible perspective. Because I… honestly, I entered teaching expecting to be frustrated for a while. My mom was a teacher for 30 years. My wife's been a teacher for a long time. My aunts were teachers, grandmother… I know that teaching is frustrating. I know that about half of all new teachers quit within five years. There's all these sorts of stressors and pressures that I entered expecting.

Richard considered his expected frustrations, and then noted, "I expect we'll have pretty high losses for next year as well." He continued:

I know that I feel frustrated just in terms of the number of things that are being placed upon me. I can imagine newer folks, especially newer folks who are really

struggling with student relationships... I'll be shocked if some of them come

back.

Richard reflected on the frustrations he felt compared to the frustrations his

colleagues shared with him in casual conversations. He mentioned issues such as large

class sizes, lack of administrative support, especially regarding student discipline, and

lack of voice in decisions as concerns he shared with his colleagues. The concept of voice

and the apparent lack of care to provide a safe space for teacher voice frustrated Richard

significantly. He lamented:

> It's all things that are prescribed for us. None of these are things we've been
>
> asked about. None are things that we've [made decisions about] at the teacher
>
> level. None are things that I believe higher-ups would think we need to give our
>
> perspective on.

Richard noted that not only was the school district not interested in teacher voice, but also

that the district did not think it needed to be interested in giving teachers voice:

> Ultimately, they don't actually have to care. And we can talk about whether they
>
> should care and about whether that makes things better. They don't have to care.
>
> The position is set up such that they don't have to be interested in feedback from
>
> teachers.

Similarly, Richard noted his wife joked about teachers being "kept busy" so they had no

time to complain or insert their voices. Whether it was purposeful or not, Richard felt a

deep and purposeful lack of interest in teacher voice from his district leaders.

While Richard felt stifled by his district, he did feel he had occasional

opportunities to use his voice, however, he noted that those opportunities were infrequent

and constricted. "I have all these sorts of different positions of voice. But only to talk about the questions that I'm being asked, only to respond, to provide my honest opinion on the things that they're interested in hearing from me." He continued, noting that even his opportunities to use his voice were frustrating because "I don't know how to voice my specific critique or concern in a way that doesn't burn bridges." While he craved using his voice, Richard felt frustrated by the limits placed on his ability to speak up, because ultimately, he learned his voice was not valued by the superintendent. Richard recalled, "He's on the record telling parents repeatedly that he cannot be challenged. He cannot be successful in his job if he's challenged, whenever he wants to make decisions. That's been communicated repeatedly." The inability of a leader to be challenged leaves no room for teacher voice to be valued.

The researcher referred to Richard's definition of empowerment from his initial interview and then asked if Richard felt that empowerment and structures, or the lack of, were a recipe for burnout and why so many teachers were leaving his school and the profession. He flatly said, "Mmhmm [affirmative]. I think that's a key component to the problem." When the researcher pressed for more, Richard continued, "Absolutely. I think that all of these concerns and frustrations that frustrate and build are leading to sort of a fractured sort of view and take on education, could be grouped under empowerment. I fully agree with that." The ability or inability of teachers to use their voices to advocate for the needs of their students and themselves affects empowerment, burnout, and whether or not teachers stay in the same school, district, or even the profession.

Nina Arnold

Nina's second interview took place on December 3, 2018 at a local restaurant between her school and the researcher's home. It was a Monday after school, and Nina called the researcher from the road. Nina and the researcher had built a relationship beyond researcher and participant because their work as fellow graduate students resulted in them being classmates occasionally. Nina had a rough day at school and wanted to vent. The researcher made mental notes of the conversation and attempted to work those questions into the interview.

At the start of the interview, the mood was tense, but not between the researcher and Nina. After sharing her thoughts about a formal classroom observation conducted by the school assistant principal that led to her meeting with school administration, Nina paced as she waited for her coffee. After several minutes waiting for their order to be prepared, Nina and the researcher settled at a table outside to prevent being overheard by other diners. Nina's tone was slightly panicked and distraught; her demeanor was significantly different from how she presented during her first interview.

Relationships and administration. "Answers come out in the wash," Nina started. "This year has been insightful, and it has definitely caused me to make... doors have been closed. Other doors have been opened. I will not be returning to [my school]. But that's the door that's been closed." At the time of the interview, Nina's career as an educator was entirely in one school, with each year except for the current academic year spent in the same grade level and classroom. She moved to a new grade level to help her administration fill an opening after high turnover the previous school year. When asked about turnover, she mentioned two thirds of the staff left, 17 teachers stayed, and

described the situation as "a mass exodus" and "an eye opener." Nina noted that while some colleagues transferred for a variety of reasons, she noted one of the top two reasons as "discontentment [with] administration." With her status as a veteran educator, she was officially dubbed a mentor for new people in the building. In addition to the turnover of teachers in her building, there were also changes in leadership.

At the time of her first interview, Nina mentioned an assistant principal who just completed her first year with Nina's school. When Nina spoke of this administrator, she noted, "She's… she's nice and she can…" she hesitated:

> She knows how to be polite and then she also knows how not to be polite. I think that's where the rub comes in where she seems a bit… two-faced might not be the word, but say being one way with a group of teachers and being completely opposite closed off…

She struggled to find the words she wanted to use to make her point while also being kind and inoffensive. Nina continued, "And, I say this because I am giving her the benefit of the doubt 'cause I am not walking in her shoes, but I do know that she is coming from a different background." Nina explained how the assistant principal just completed her first year as an administrator. She added the context that her assistant principal also taught middle school – as opposed to elementary school – in a different district than Nina's current school and had a variety of positions resulting in a range of experience prior to joining Nina's school.

While discussing her assistant principal, Nina mentioned giving her "the benefit of the doubt" multiple times, coupled with concerns she had about the assistant principal's leadership style:

She would literally throw them under the bus… If a staff member questions, not

deliberately like being rude or disrespectful, but just honestly like questioning

why [the assistant principal] was doing something because it's just different than

it was before. Like, we're just questioning. Asking questions. That she would take

it as they were questioning her authority and go to the Board [of Education] and

treat it as though they were being disrespectful to her.

Nina found it difficult to build relationships with an administrator whom she felt was

unsupportive, and as a result, felt her administrator did not know her more than

superficially. Nina questioned whether or not her new administrator even had the desire

to get to know her:

It's not evident that she… maybe she was in her own way, but I can tell you right

now if someone wants to ask her to describe me like, 'Tell me about Ms. Arnold'

she would not know the entire picture. She would not know me. She would know

me through her filter of who I am, but she wouldn't know me at all – and at the

beginning of the year we did a personality test or quiz or whatever.

Nina elaborated and flatly stated, "If someone said to [my assistant principal], 'Do you

know Nina Arnold on a personal level?' she would not."

The lack of depth in the relationship Nina felt with her administrators contributed

to Nina's feelings about the viability and success of her school. She acknowledged that

strong leadership could steer a school in a variety of ways based on the relationships

between administration and faculty. She noted:

Leadership can make or break a school, period. They set the tone. They set the

tone for the entire thing. If there's a strong leader who cares about their staff, it's

133

going to show. If there's a strong leader who doesn't care, that's going to show in a different way. And if there's a leadership that's not so strong in what they do and don't care [about], then that boat is not going to be as stable.

Prior to the arrival of her new assistant principal, Nina felt a close bond with her principal:

> She took the time to get to know her staff, and she noticed what our strengths were and what our weaknesses were, and she didn't hold our weaknesses over our head. Like, "Oh, how dare you!" you know, "Oh my gosh!" It was more of "Let's focus on what you're really good at and I want you to thrive."

In this new school year, Nina felt significantly distanced from her principal and, overall, targeted by her school leadership. Nina had an observation shortly before her second interview. She received negative feedback with no opportunity to debrief. She felt shocked and hurt, as she consistently received positive feedback during observations prior to her work with this new administrator and her move to a new grade level:

> I can pull up from the past 12 years my evaluations have always been threes [on a 1-4 scale]. And even within the past two years… two years ago I had received a couple of fours. Really awesome observations and reviews. After one observation that [the assistant principal] didn't like, that was not up to par for her, she gave me mostly twos, one three. And afterwards placed me on a PDP which is the Professional Development Plan. Typically, I thought that a PDP was supposed to be for teachers, struggling teachers who have consistently, over a period of time, has shown that they have been struggling.

134

The experience left her feeling hurt and abandoned by her principal, a person whom she described as someone who "helped raise me professionally." Nina felt deceived, as well, and felt that she did not receive fair treatment. Years of successful observations punctuated by one below-standard observation felt like a betrayal:

> Here's the thing. If they would have come to me and said, 'Let's work this out…'
> If they would've come to me and had a sit-down conversation that would've been completely different than pulling me in and saying, "We're going to move you to another grade level."

Nina declared that her principal's decision to allow her placement on a PDP to occur without any conversation hurt her more than any of the other events that school year. The lack of supportive relationships with administrators felt disempowering to Nina.

When the researcher asked Nina what was empowering, she said, "Oh, God. Teammates, rapport with your class, relationships on different planes…vertical, horizontal, co-workers, and also administration. I don't know if anything other than relationships would [empower me]."

Autonomy and self-efficacy. The trust Nina built with her administration in previous years gave her confidence to try new things. She referred to the attitude of her past assistant principal, with whom she had worked prior to the 2018-2019 school year, as encouraging toward new and/or innovative pedagogical strategies. She described her experience as "If you say 'Hey, we're going to do this!' the [previous administrator] said 'Awesome idea! Go for it! Just make sure that you're on the right track… just make sure that you're doing what you're supposed to do.'" Conversely, Nina's perspective of her

current administrator was different. She noted, "The curriculum isn't scripted, but for her, if it's not a certain way that she says… then 'How dare you!' I guess."

Nina felt nearly immediately at odds with her new administrator and felt a lack of trust, as she felt she was always being watched and "under the microscope." These feelings of surveillance influenced her choices in her work and her feelings of self-efficacy. "It's very hard to get fired up about what you're doing if the administration doesn't have your back or doesn't know how to encourage you." Nina felt debilitated in her academic year appointment, as superficial relationships, punctuated by a poor performance review, had her questioning her efficacy. As a result, she did not feel empowered in her classroom during the academic year.

Lissette Young

Lissette's second interview took place on Tuesday, November 13, 2018. The researcher met Lissette at the public library in town, and they found a small, private workspace to meet and talk freely without being overheard. It was a cool fall evening shortly before Thanksgiving break, and Lissette met the researcher after another work commitment. Upon sitting in the room for her interview, she sighed.

Feeling pressured and overwhelmed. Lisette expressed a general sense of feeling overwhelmed and discussed her anxiety toward the profession, specifically in her district. She was later than she anticipated being for her interview, as she had a required meeting after school. Lissette took several deep breaths as she discussed the content of the meeting and her uncertainty in her work, describing the pressure she currently felt. She explained, "It comes from lots of places. It comes from administration; it comes from

district leaders. Especially now with the new superintendent change, there's even more pressure…"

Lissette discussed the variety of ways she felt pressure as a teacher, from standardized testing to the lack of time to get everything "in" – pacing calendars that are too fast-paced and less time to build relationships with her students. She elaborated:

Originally, the place of original stress comes from places out of my control, and that's what bothers me the most, as every teacher. It comes from the fact that we have to cover this number of unrealistic standards during the year and the upper grades especially that… and I get a lot of the lower struggling students in my room so having to move at the same fast pace as everyone else is very… that weighs me down every day.

During her interview, Lissette expressed a feeling of hopelessness that accompanied being overwhelmed due to the pressures of teaching:

There's nothing we can do about what we need to cover and I know that. I just want to bring that joy back – for learning – into my classroom. Because what I've seen, I know a lot of it… I hate mentioning standardized tests, but I know that's what gets my kids, too. I know that's what gets to my students, that they know that that's coming at the end of the year… How can I recreate [the excitement at Camp Ignite] within what [teachers] have to do and within the pressures that the kids themselves feel? How can I bring them back to [a] place of loving learning again?

She lamented the time crunch teachers felt to teach everything and to teach it well, and the pressures the students felt to perform. The pressure in schools is not limited to adults, but other stakeholders, too.

In addition to feeling overwhelmed by her profession in general, Lissette felt additionally pressured by the leaders in her district, Magnolia County. "District-wide, there's a lot [of negative content] circulating in the public right now that's not directly communicated to teachers or toward teachers." She referred to the instance, as did Richard, who also taught in her district, regarding the superintendent's view of teachers. Lissette continued, "But that has been put out there in recent months through board meetings and things like that that causes all of us [teachers] that follow those things to feel even more pressured."

The seemingly never-ending pressure Lissette experienced in her work had long-lasting effects. What she referred to as stress in her first year morphed into a heavy weight she felt constantly and made her and her colleagues sometimes question why they remained in education. "For my first year, yeah. I felt constantly stressed. Stressed in a different way – now it's more pressure stressed, when I say stressed. But then it was just, I don't know. Overwhelming senses, I guess." The researcher probed, asking what that might do to a teacher. Lissette responded:

> I mean, you question your decisions to be a teacher. Especially if you went to a
> college for your teaching degree that really – I mean, I can't not say this because I
> think it absolutely played into it – if you go to a college for your education degree
> that's very empowering and tells you and teaches you one thing and then you

experience something very different your first year [in the classroom]… it definitely weighs you down and makes you question your decisions.

Relationships. Lissette highlighted the importance of relationships in her professional life: between herself and her students, between herself and her colleagues, and between herself and her administrators. Lissette recognized how the different tiers of her relationships filtered down and affected the next and was concerned about how the top-down pressure from district and school administration trickled down and seeped into her teacher-student relationships. She noted,

> One thing that is extremely important to me, that I'm very passionate about, is building relationships with kids. And that's why the pressure side of things really bothers me… or gets to me at times – because I feel more pressure that we have coming down the tunnel, as they say 'from high above' especially this past year. You have less time to do those things that we know are important in elementary school with building relationships.

Lissette felt pressure to perform, and that meant prioritizing academic content during the time she had with her students. However, based on her nature, she felt compelled to prioritize relationship-building with her students.

The pressure Lissette endured from superiors not only affected her teaching and relationship-building with students, but also affected how she worked with her colleagues. She discussed how seniority in her building, at least on her grade-level team, directly correlated to opportunities to voice her ideas. Those opportunities, or lack thereof, contribute to the quality of relationships with her colleagues. She thought back to the previous school year. "We felt like we didn't have the chance to voice things as

much, because they were squashed by people who had been [on the grade level team] longer." Her opportunity to use her voice and have that voice heard increased as she became an instructional leader:

> I am now one of the veterans on the team… There's more of a place for me to lead the way with things and make my voice heard more. So, I enjoy that; it's been really great. Because, feeling that you don't have that power, I guess, was not a good feeling at all… and so that's changed a lot, opened up doors.

As an instructional leader, Lissette leveraged her position in the group to unite her peers and forge toward positive collective change for their students. She recalled:

> And so, we do a lot of team pushing of things, too. And our administrators are really receptive of that. That's what's made a huge difference. That has helped each of us feel more empowered, too… that's made a huge change… Now that I've seen both sides of that, I think it's what makes a lot of difference in the classroom. And it makes me wonder if [a lack of empowerment is] one of the reasons some people leave the classroom.

Lissette's position within her grade level team and her relationships with other team members related to her feelings of self-efficacy on the team, provided opportunities for autonomy and to act agentically, and ultimately, left her feeling empowered.

When describing her relationships with administrators in her building, Lissette glowed with pride. "So, my school has very little turnover," she exclaimed. "Because of what the administrators do to support our empowerment – teacher empowerment. That is the reason. And that's what you call a well-known fact around our community. People want to work at our school because teachers feel empowered here." Lissette stated her

administrators "take a lot of time and make a big effort to build relationships with us" and that they value teacher input. Lissette declared the stance of her school administrative team as holding "a very down-up approach" when it comes to making big decisions and noted, "I think that makes a world of difference."

Lissette felt like a colleague rather than a subordinate in her building, especially after she transitioned from a "new" teacher to one in her fourth year. The administrative team held discussions with teachers "rather than just send out an email or just announce it in a meeting" and meetings, according to Lissette, were infrequent. "If the principal wants something to change or wants to know what we're doing in our team or in our classrooms, he comes to us." These factors led Lissette to state, "I think that's a big piece of why we feel empowered."

The building-level administrators Lissette worked with, like her principal and assistant principals, were key to her mindset and happiness. She felt confident they supported her and trusted her as a professional. "I have a principal that would… that really supports you if you can back [it] up with a good reason. He's the kind of administrator that [if] you back up your idea or the different way you want to do things, then he supports it one hundred percent and that is what has made a difference with me." She continued:

> If I had an idea [to do something differently] my administrators are the type of administrators that do support that. I do feel empowered by my administrators, one hundred percent. I know that I'm in a pretty unique situation with that, because that is not the norm around our community.

141

These collegial relationships, however, also worked as a shield for Lissette and other teachers in her building:

> My building level administration keeps me as far away as possible from burnout, helps keep me as far away as possible. And they're the kind of administrators that you can go to if you're feeling a certain way and talk through it with them, which is very helpful.

At the building level, Lissette felt respected, heard, and protected by her administrators.

Lissette showed a pattern of developing deep, trusting, professional relationships, which she highlighted in her discussion of relationships with stakeholders inside her building: with students, teachers, and administration. However, outside the relationships Lissette held with people in her local school, Lissette interacted differently. There was a disconnect between Lissette's perspective of her role, value, and voice at the school level as compared to the district level. She said:

> So, district level, I don't think that there is a forum or space or a place or a way for me to even begin to feel more empowered, because I don't feel like my opinion is relevant on a district level. There's not a space.

She noted her district does not consider or hold up the voices of teachers and claimed:

> There's not a forum. There's not a place, there's not a space… it's not unique to our district. That's how all districts are run in the country, that there's board meetings, right? And where's the space for teachers there? They say they're welcome for teachers, but…

Lissette recognized how different things were in the district office, especially regarding the school board. "I know that most of what they discuss there is kind of above

us," she lamented, referring to "…financial things and this and that, but most things that they're discussing, even if they're handled at a higher level, they affect us teachers, and that's why I wish there was more of a space for that." However, she was clear that if there was any space at all, it came with limits. "That's something that I wish we had the opportunity for. In a safe forum, not one where we're gonna be targeted after that for having… a vocal opinion." She continued and made clear that she was not one to hold back. "I'm one of those teachers that's very passionate and vocal about things." As Lissette spoke to the researcher, her glow started to fade.

As she transitioned to discussing her perspectives of the power she held, of the opportunities to be and feel heard, she cast her eyes down. "It doesn't seem like having a personal teacher opinion is valued, and if you have one and it's not aligned with the powers that be in the district, I think it would definitely be targeted," she said defeatedly. Lissette's desire for freedom and to use her voice resulted in a micro-level of empowerment, but a macro-level of disempowerment.

Annie Nelson

Annie's second interview with the researcher took place in Annie's office, in the media center at Magnolia Middle School. Piles of papers were scattered about her small office, and she cleared off a chair by moving one stack to another to make space for the researcher. During the interview, Annie took a quick call from her child, and snacked on Triscuits, making sure to offer to share with the researcher.

Autonomy. During the traditional school year, Annie's day-to-day experience as a media specialist was often much different from that of her colleagues in traditional

143

classroom teacher roles. She noted that she always felt she had the ability to make decisions for her students and her program:

> I have been lucky enough to have administration that either trusted me, or they were very open to the ideas that I had. So, I think that definitely makes a difference. I know media specialists at other schools who are not able to make changes about the way they do things.

However, Annie qualified this and noted that some of her freedom, and the freedom of her colleagues, was based on the fact that there simply was not enough time to implement a level of oversight and micromanagement parallel to the adopted programs that would be necessary to limit teachers in their actions. "We've spent a lot of time hearing that we're expected to use systems, and there's gonna be a system for this, and a system for that. I don't think they have time to watch what everybody's doing." She lamented. "I think you could go in your classroom and probably teach most any way you wanted to, as long as your class was under control and your kids were being fairly successful on standardized tests."

The autonomy Annie felt at her school was partially due to relationships with her administration but also resulted from the strains felt by the administration in her school. Annie related this accidental autonomy to being empowered and noted, "I think you can get away with being empowered. I guess eventually you could probably lose your job for it, but I don't think they have enough ability to see what everybody's doing to keep up with it." The idea of "getting away with being empowered" was akin to teaching how one wanted to, "as long as your class was under control and your kids were being fairly successful on standardized tests." Essentially, as long as a teacher was not acting in a way

144

to draw negative attention, they would be viewed as a non-threat to the success of the school and therefore, left alone.

Annie's perspective of her autonomy at school vacillated. During her interviews with the researcher, she sometimes felt incredibly constrained, followed by noting she had the freedom to make decisions and changes. When discussing her role as a media specialist, she said, "I mean, I have a lot of flexibility, so I can change most anything I want to. There aren't a lot of things that I can't change, I guess. Because being a media specialist, I think that makes it easier to be able to like, think, 'Hey, this right here needs changing' and then making that change is pretty easy." When asked about the relationship between change-making, autonomy, and empowerment, she began to define empowerment, saying, "I could see times where some things you just take it as it is, and then there are people who question everything. [Empowerment] is a personality thing, I think… the ability to make change if necessary… is important."

Her experience was complex, and she realized that even when she did not feel empowered, when she did not have the autonomy to do things her way, it was not all of the things, or all her way. She chose to pick her battles.

> Actually, as much as our principal makes me feel like I can make decisions on my own, I also know what my boundaries are. Like, I know how to play the system with him. I know what he wants to know, but I know what I can do if I want…
> You know what I mean? I know how to work it.

Annie's tenure in the building with her principal afforded her the knowledge of how to work within and around the systems in place. While she did not feel free to act truly

empowered. She felt safe to exercise agency and to act autonomously because of her position and relationship with her principal.

District vs. local school. Because of Annie's role as the media specialist in her school, she was a singleton. Therefore, she had much more exposure to the inner-workings of the school district than a traditional classroom teacher did. In her building, she was a department of one and had significantly more contact with people working in the district office. As a result, she felt the pressures from the district office more intensely than a teacher working in a department of the school, often shielded by team or grade-level leads, in addition to layers of administration at the local school level.

At the time of the interviews between Annie and the researcher, Annie's school district – Magnolia County Public Schools – had recently undergone a change in leadership. A new superintendent was appointed, and with the change in leadership came changes and adjustments to policies and procedures that ultimately trickled down from the district to the local schools. Decisions, such as purchasing, had layers of bureaucracy that previously did not exist. Classroom teachers did not feel this shift, this new layering of paperwork, but Annie felt the weight, and it affected her ability to act autonomously when making decisions for her school library.

She felt professionally diminished because the new district leadership removed her ability to make decisions. MCPS placed that responsibility into the hands of someone in the district office – someone, Annie believed, who likely lacked the contextual understanding necessary to assess the needs of her school and her students. She said:

> I guess they've changed the way they allocate funding, and so there's a whole lot
>
> more district oversight on how funds are spent. And I think it's the desire to

146

control things, and I just got this… let me show you [shows researcher a piece of paper]. It's one of my purchase orders. Look at the department [indicates newly formed department]. I feel like it diminishes the fact that we are a specific school who has specific needs, and I feel like that I know my students better than anybody else, and the needs of my students when it comes to our media program and what our media program should pay for and do and use. And I have lots of experience and expertise in that area, and if I want to buy 20 copies of *The Hate U Give*, then I can. Previously. Now, I still can, maybe, if somebody tells me I can. But it has to go through that extra level of district approval.

Annie felt her autonomy being stripped away as she suddenly had additional levels of approval to pass through. She mentioned the new approval levels added unnecessary stress, as she had to "explain why you're doing something when you shouldn't have to."

The new stressors Annie felt left her feeling tired, and she noted those feelings could eventually lead to burnout, claiming, "I'm gonna have to spend more time writing grants or spend more time pleading my case to the district for money that should have been books in the first place for the kids." She referred again to her building level support and said, regarding burnout, "And I've been lucky to have administrators that are pretty supportive and pretty trusting of what I do and need, but I also pick my battles."

The relationships Annie formed at the local school were different from those on the district level, and she noted the difference between feeling empowered or disempowered by the relationship was trust:

I just think the key to being empowered is probably trust, trust in yourself and trust from above, I guess. And the desire to have input, I guess. The desire from

your administration and your team and your… that to be able to desire for input from people. Like, I think there's a lot of people who *think* they want input, like they [think to themselves], "I am a principal, and I would like input from my teachers." But then there are people who say they want input, but they really don't, I think. I don't know.

The ability to provide input, have that input honestly considered, and the reciprocal trust to express that input comprised Annie's definition of empowerment and defined her perspectives of her experience at school.

Mollie Ingalls

Mollie and the researcher reconnected late in the afternoon, the Friday prior to Thanksgiving 2018. As they were both graduate students at the time of the interview, the pair met in a study room in Weagle University's College of Education. Mollie joined the researcher after a long week of traveling between multiple schools for her current position in her school system.

At the time of the initial interview, Mollie was uncertain as to her exact position for the upcoming school year and informed the researcher the district would assign her to one of three vastly different positions. When the second interview began, Mollie reported that her position for the school year was to teach in a gifted pullout model across three elementary schools in her district, which required her to travel to each school multiple times a week.

Voice and validity. After Mollie's first two years of teaching, she was nearly finished with a master's program but felt undervalued by her administration and burned out. Mollie reported that her principal not only had a deficit view of her students but also

claimed students only needed love to find success in school. She felt at odds with her principal. According to Mollie, the principal never visited teachers' classrooms and had a low bar for student achievement, both of which Mollie claimed were directly related to the minority majority population of the school. When she reached out to her principal, "…it fell on deaf ears… I couldn't change his mindset, so it got to the point where I'm like, 'Well, why bother? Why waste my breath? He has his opinion and it's not going to change.' But, so, yeah. My second year teaching I almost quit. Then, I was able to transfer into Orchard City [Schools], and I obviously stayed." The opportunity to use her voice, and at the same time feel heard, was necessary for Mollie to feel satisfied in her work.

Since moving to her new district, Mollie saw the opportunity to use her voice and be heard grow. Initially, she felt limited to speak up and out. She remembered, "The only thing we vote for… is Teacher of the Year. We vote for that, and more trivial stuff, like how we want to do our Christmas party." She felt that her school tried, at times, to listen to teacher voice, "but then again, sometimes certain things we are vocal about, they're like, 'We hear you. We wish we could change it, but that's a district thing.'" She noted, however, that teachers had the opportunity to go to the school board should they desire to do so. "Our school doesn't just stop at the principal level. If we wanted to, we can go to the school board or central office and still voice concerns." Nevertheless, when asked if she felt comfortable to do that she flatly said, "No."

Mollie clarified that when it came to her administration, she usually felt free to express her opinions:

I had to advocate for myself, and so, I just made sure to stay more of a respectful

approach. But the first time, I hope it didn't come across it, but I was so nervous I

was nauseous. But now that I do it again, not so much anymore.

The more Mollie used her voice, the more comfortable she felt doing so.

She emphasized the importance of not only feeling free to use her voice without

fear of retaliation but also feeling as if she was truly heard. "I mean, I feel more validated

if my opinion's been at least heard, whether or not they like my opinion or enact my

opinion. That doesn't really affect me one way or another. At least they are

acknowledging that they've heard it and they… it's more of a validation thing." Mollie

clarified that validation did not require a decision made in her favor. She noted she

wanted confirmation of her opinion "and actually validate it because they are listening

and not just pacifying me is important to me."

The validation of Mollie's voice was the most important component of using her

voice. "If no one ever validates what you're saying, you might just not share anymore. So

therefore, you feel less empowered to speak." Using her voice, feeling heard, and feeling

validated by those to whom she was speaking were key to Mollie's perspective of

empowerment.

In addition to using her voice to speak up, Mollie felt it important to have a say in

the day to day of her classroom. One of her schools prescribed a schedule for the

progression through the day's learning. However, Mollie disagreed with the order of

subjects and found it disjointed and difficult for her students to follow. She proposed

different blocks of time for what she thought was a better workflow. The administration

was concerned about how a change in Mollie's schedule might affect pullout times for

students receiving specialized services, such as speech and special education. "They were okay with us changing our schedule as long as it didn't impact kids that get pulled out." Mollie felt heard and validated, as she was able to make a small change in her classroom that positively affected her students.

In the first eight years of Mollie's career, while feeling her voice was amplified in some aspects, she felt it was silenced in others. Standardized testing added a layer of pressure that left Mollie and her colleagues feeling constrained. "I feel like [my colleagues are] so concerned with the results for a test, that they don't want to, not that they don't want to, but they just don't think you [can spend the time to] incorporate fun into [teaching]… they feel limited…" When the researcher asked for more, Mollie noted this was "because part of your evaluation is based on the growth bubbles of students from the test [in the year prior]." Mollie and her colleagues felt pressure for their students to perform well on standardized tests, and that activities considered fun were a waste of time.

In her new position as a travelling gifted teacher, Mollie felt differing levels of empowerment when she was in different buildings. In her role most days, she provided enrichment specific to the content and academic standards addressed by core content teachers. However, on Fridays she had the greatest opportunity to use her voice and make decisions – to act autonomously – for the benefit of her students:

> My Friday days, I actually feel empowered on those days because I get to decide what I teach, or what I do. At Camp Ignite, you get to pick what you wanted to do, whereas those days I decide what I wanna teach, and how I wanna. I create the lessons; I don't have any standards or anything to follow. It's completely what I

wanna do to help enrich the kids. And help push them further. And help challenge

them. So, I get to decide what I do. Which is nice. That's one reason why I

wanted to do this position that one day. It's nice when there's no expectations.

You're there just to make sure that you're enriching them and challenging them.

The researcher probed to learn more about the parameters of Mollie's Friday schedule.

Mollie continued, "There's nothing I have to follow. I get to just design – it's my design

day. I get to pick what I do, and what I wanna do, and how I go about it."

The researcher commented that Mollie had a higher level of freedom on Fridays –

essentially complete freedom in terms of instructional decisions. She asked Mollie how

that felt. A grin spread across Mollie's face, "Not gonna lie, I kinda like it. I like it."

Relationships. Mollie's comfort in using her voice in the workplace hinged on

her relationships with those in her building, especially her administrators. Her lack of

relationships early in her career once led her to consider leaving the profession, until she

secured a job transfer to a new district. The researcher asked Mollie about contributing

factors to her feelings of burnout and desire to quit. She replied, "I think it was my

administration at the school." Mollie transferred to a new school district and then spent

six years in the same school, building her confidence, her experience, and relationships

with those around her. "Certain people I feel comfortable enough straight off the bat to

just have any conversation with," she said, "and so my administration, some of them took

a little longer than others. But now, any of them I could go and say, 'Hey, we have a

problem' and not be nervous or nauseous feeling."

As Mollie's relationships with her administration grew, so did her confidence in

using her voice. Teacher evaluations provided only a snapshot of her performance, but

her relationships turned evaluation into a conversation instead of a one-way sharing of information:

> They'll ask if they have a question about a standard they are measuring, plus they'll ask me before they leave [my classroom] so it usually doesn't get that far, which is nice. But I think at the beginning, like when I first started [teaching], I was not really unsure of myself, but more… I didn't want to go against the principal. Now that, one, I know them better, and then two, I know myself as a teacher better, I'm okay. I'm just more confident in my eight years now.

Mollie felt like she was part of the conversation rather than receiving an evaluation with no opportunity to provide input, context, and advocate for herself.

Relationships with administration did not guarantee Mollie free reign in her classroom, but they provided a foundation that made her comfortable to ask questions and to take risks. She noted that her administrators "try not to squish your ideas as long as you can back it up. There's a reason behind it, which is good." Mollie felt empowered to approach her school leaders with an idea as long as she had sound reasoning. However, she was clear on the impact a single relationship, or lack of relationship, can have. "I'll admit this year I much prefer my Monday, Tuesday, and Friday days than Wednesday and Thursday. This one person has changed the environment of the school." Mollie spent Wednesdays and Thursdays in the same school. She felt her relationship with a specific colleague in that building negatively affected her, so she preferred being in the schools she was assigned to on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays.

Rita Roberts

On a blustery evening in early December 2018, Rita and the researcher met at the public library. The library was bustling with local K-12 students hanging out together, university students searching for a quiet place to study to prepare for finals, and locals enjoying the amenities of the library. Rita and the researcher tucked themselves away in a small study space in a back corner of the first floor. While it was a mostly undisturbed and private conversation, occasionally an adolescent child would run by and scream with glee.

Autonomy. Rita's experiences teaching across two different schools – and two different school systems – provided her with rich perspectives for someone so new in her career. She found it important to discuss her experiences in and across both settings because they affected her so significantly. She recalled her first school. "I was not allowed to do anything that I wanted to. We were given our curriculum and what books to read and what to write about and how to do it." The repetition and lack of autonomy irked Rita, and she exclaimed, "It's just very boring going through the same motions every day." Rita was bound to a scripted curriculum, with strict instructions regarding not only the resources she used, but also a precise plan for how she implemented them:

> We're just handed what we had to do. It was kinda like you just need to be a
> robot, and here's what you need to say during reading. Here's what you need to
> go over in math, here's what you need to do in writing. It got really boring.

Rita lamented the rigid structure of her curriculum and noted that it confined her to a prescribed list of books to read with her students. Each book had a set vocabulary list. She was unable to select resources she felt were best for her students. She was unable

to use professional judgment. All the options for her to practice the art of teaching were removed, and instead, the expectation was for Rita to implement the vision of a corporate, boxed curriculum. Rita experienced a complete lack of autonomy.

Additionally, Rita lacked the autonomy in her school to pace instruction, within reasonable parameters, based on the needs of her students. Rita reflected on her time at her first teaching job and compared her time there to her current school location at the time of the interview.

> It was very much the expectations that if they came, observed me, which they would, and they went to the classroom next door, we should be doing the same exact things, same exact read-aloud at the same exact time, with the same exact questioning. Everything should have looked the same in all three classrooms [of the same grade level]. And to me, that's just not… all classes are different. So, you shouldn't have to do the same exact things. And now, I realize that that's not how all schools work.

The use of scripted curriculum materials was something Rita experienced in both of her schools and her school districts. Reflecting on the curriculum materials at her current school, Rita said:

> I feel like we're all saying the same thing because we're given the slides, you're given the book, you're given the activities… It's like – here, read this chapter before tomorrow and then literally say what she's saying… And so, it's like, you don't need me there if that's what's going to happen.

However, the way Rita felt her administration expected her to implement the materials varied greatly based on school context.

The boundaries and structures Rita felt at Ramsay Elementary were much more flexible and fluid than those she felt while working at Rocky Hill Elementary, part of Magnolia County Public Schools. She noted she and her current co-teacher deviated from the script. Rita said she felt she had the autonomy to act with agency in this arena. "I luckily feel that I work in an environment [at Ramsay Elementary] where if I deviate from [the scripted curriculum] – which we do – it would be okay." She continued, "I feel like as long as we had a strong enough argument, [administration] would be like 'Okay' whereas at Rocky Hill I never deviated."

Rita continued discussing the requirements of a scripted curriculum for some of her content. She said, "It's like the only thing that has gotten under our skin as a fifth grade team" and continued to describe how she and her co-teacher "have kind of deviated from it." However, in that setting she felt confident in her decisions and said with confidence, "If we're asked about it, we have backup."

Relationships. Rita had teaching experience at two different elementary schools in two different districts. Ultimately, the driving force behind leaving one for another was her relationship with her administrators. While teaching at Rocky Hill, she had a heavily prescribed and scripted curriculum. She shared:

> So, really as a teacher, I was not allowed to do anything that I wanted to, we were given our curriculums and what books to read and what to write about and how to do it. And it's just so very boring going through the same motions every day. And I was deathly afraid of my administration… I felt like they talked to me [like] I was below them, which I am – I get that – but I was still, like, an educated human. So, I was like, I went to a good school, I know what I am doing.

156

Rita felt disrespected and undervalued as not only a teacher but also as a human. She planned her bathroom breaks with her administrators' schedules in mind to avoid passing them in the halls but noted that, "My principal now, I can text her. I can call her. I can email her. I go up to their offices to say 'Hi.'" At her first school, Rita minimized her interactions with her administration because she felt she lacked a connection and relationship with them.

Rita, who coached volleyball at one of the school district's high schools, had a significant interest in student motivation. During her time with the researcher, she mentioned motivation, relationships, and reciprocity between the two. She also discussed that she felt motivation was related to empowerment. Rita felt relationships permeated a person's empowerment regardless of their age. She discussed that when a teacher or student felt competent or confident, that person displayed self-efficacy. Rita expressed that when teachers display a sense of self-efficacy, their evaluators feel confident in them.

Rita discussed what she called "big topics" related to motivation, "Like, autonomy, relationships, communication, trust, respect, like [administration is] not over our heads all the time or in our rooms all the time. I've seen my admin in my room maybe three times this year." Rita experienced a drastic difference in oversight in her two schools, and felt the administrative team treated her more professionally at her current school, Ramsay Elementary, compared to her first school, Rocky Hill Elementary. She felt respected and ultimately felt more motivated, more empowered, to come to work and invest more time and energy than ever before.

Rita shared her feelings about her own motivation and empowerment as they related to relationships with her administrators:

> That obviously increases my own motivation, as it would with a child, as well, that I've so learned. Then that makes me want to go home and keep lesson planning and keep doing what I think my kids need to do and learning the content so that I can pass that on to them in a better way. If you feel empowered, you're going to be highly motivated. If you don't, you're going to be highly unmotivated. I've been in both of those situations.

In her discussion with the researcher, Rita continued and noted that either a lack of empowerment or active disempowerment, over time, would lead to teacher burnout. Additionally, Rita connected empowerment to relationships, as she felt more empowered during the school year when her interview took place because she had a "strong relationship" with her co-teacher.

Relationships were key to Rita and her empowerment. When considering one of the greatest factors in building and maintaining a relationship, Rita noted, "If I ask someone to do something, and they don't do it, that's…a big letdown. But, if someone doesn't ask me to do something and they just do it over me, it's like they didn't trust me." She concluded, "It kind of funnels down." Trust and strength of relationship were reciprocal for Rita.

Rita asserted, "Once you build a relationship with admin, you don't want to let them down, or anybody that you build a relationship with." Rita's relationships encouraged her to work hard, but she noted, "If there's none of that extra support, then I

would be burnt out, too." Without the relationships Rita had with her colleagues, she would lack motivation and empowerment and feel symptoms of burnout.

Mae Evans

Mae met the researcher at the public library on a cool afternoon, the first weekday of Thanksgiving Break 2018. Tucked away in a private study room on the second floor, Mae shared updates on the climate at both her school, Cherry Street Elementary, and her district, Magnolia County Public Schools. Similar to the first interview, Mae chose her words carefully. However, she shared her concerns and frustrations openly. Less than a month prior to the first day of school, Mae's administration offered her a new position. Instead of moving to first grade at the start of the year as expected, she stayed with her second grade team but joined the dual language immersion program.

Pressure. While the start of any school year comes with a certain level of pressure to be ready for students to arrive, Mae felt additional pressure. "July 10th I was offered the position… We had two new members… It was a lot of planning in a little short time because school started August 7th." Mae reported to school that year on July 30 and noted, "And our new building – we couldn't get in until July 25th!" Mae experienced the general pressure felt by many of her colleagues to start the school year, but that year, joining a new team and moving into a new building added to her load and therefore increased the pressure she endured.

The stresses from the start of the year were only a portion of the pressure Mae felt daily in her work as a classroom teacher. Mae also felt pressure from the district. "It's just all the demands, all the musts. You have to do it!" she exclaimed. From scripted curriculum to professional development monopolizing her planning time, Mae felt

disempowered by the "mandates, just the mandates, just the meetings… Please just respect my time to… You're asking me to do these things. I want to do these things. I love this job. I'm here, just respect my time."

Mae felt pressured to implement multiple programs and curricula adopted by Magnolia County but never felt she had the time to learn, implement, reflect, and improve before MCPS scrapped one program and adopted another. This pressure left Mae frustrated.

> If they tell you you have to do it, you *have* to do it. You have to find a way to make it work for you because there is an expectation that… and they have spent a lot of time researching all of this, and they say, "Well, this is what we're gonna do." That's what you've gotta do. And it's what you gotta do.

Regardless of the program, Mae's refrain rang true; she felt that no matter what, "That's what you've gotta do," and she was going to do her best to do that.

Relationships. While Mae felt the weight of expectations from the district level, she also felt somewhat shielded at the local level, noting that at Cherry Street Elementary, "There is a high level of trust. Our principal is such that she's going to give you the direction. She's going to expect you to just do it, and she's going to trust you to do it." Mae described her principal as "approachable" and that her "door is always open unless somebody's already in there." However, that school-level relationship was not always enough, especially in a smaller district like MCPS. "Our principal is supportive," Mae said. "She's supportive. But if there are things, and there are so many things that come down from the district that just…" Mae realized that her principal could not always shield her from the pressures from the school district.

160

The open-door policy of Mae's principal did not extend beyond Cherry Street Elementary. Mae felt a stark separation from the superintendent in MCPS, and his stance heavily affected her. The local paper quoted the superintendent of MCPS as saying issues with student performance were "a teacher problem" as opposed to something else. When Mae discussed her feelings about the superintendent, she paused frequently and chose her words carefully.

At the district level, Mae did not feel like her voice mattered. She felt disempowered by her superintendent, calling him "an alienating figure" especially "in contrast with the previous superintendent," but shared she thought "he has a great vision" for the district. Mae elaborated and said, "He's my boss. I believe he has a good agenda. I believe he has the best interests at heart, but you know, what he says is filtered through my principal." Ultimately, Mae chose to focus on optimism, and said:

> I think it really has been an enjoyable experience overall. I just really reflect on, "Oh, what a good school I have. What a good boss I have. That's amazing." Because, you know, I've never… You always think, "This that, this that," but then when you really – when you're asked those questions and then you plug it in your school, you say, "Boy, I'm really fortunate."

Mae described MCPS's superintendent as "dictatorial" and taking the attitude of, "I'm the boss and you're not" when it came to managing people. However, she did not directly fault him for it, noting:

> But he is the guy in charge. And he is the one responsible, ultimately. He's the one who has to answer for the education of these kids. And he's gotta figure it

out. And if he makes a misstep, which I'm not saying he has, he's… You gotta let

him have it.

Mae recognized the power held by her superintendent so she was reluctant to outright

defy or degrade him. Despite the negative factors contributing to the environment of her

academic year context, Mae's outlook and perspective regarding her relationships and her

work were the fuel to keep her going each day for over 40 years in the profession.

This section profiled the experiences of eight K-12 teachers during both their time

at Camp Ignite 2018 and the following fall semester in their academic year classrooms

through a within-case analysis. The researcher developed themes from each case

regarding teacher experience in each context. The following section will present themes

that emerged through the cross-case analysis.

Cross-Case Analysis

The purpose of this study was to investigate K-12 teachers' perspectives of

empowerment across contexts and the factors that influenced those perspectives.

Specifically, the study examined K-12 teacher perspectives of empowerment as they

related to their practices in the context of their involvement in a summer learning

program and in the context of their work as classroom teachers during the academic

school year. Additionally, this study sought to identify factors that influenced teachers'

perspectives of their empowerment across contexts.

The guiding research questions were: 1) What are K-12 teachers' perspectives of

their experiences as instructors in a summer learning program? 2) How do K-12 teachers

compare their experiences as instructors in a summer learning program to their

experiences during the academic year? 3) What factors influence teachers' perspectives of their experience across contexts?

The researcher examined and subsequently analyzed the data for each case twice – once for the summer learning program context and once for the academic year context. The researcher first presented each participant's individual case detailing his or her experience in a summer learning program and his or her experience during the subsequent school year and will now present a cross-case analysis of the eight participants, highlighting themes that revealed themselves from the data across contexts and across participants. The researcher situated the findings from the analyses around three dominant themes in each general context, building six overarching themes from the data. The researcher used notecards to develop a mind map, which is available digitally in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1

Factors influencing teacher empowerment across contexts and cases
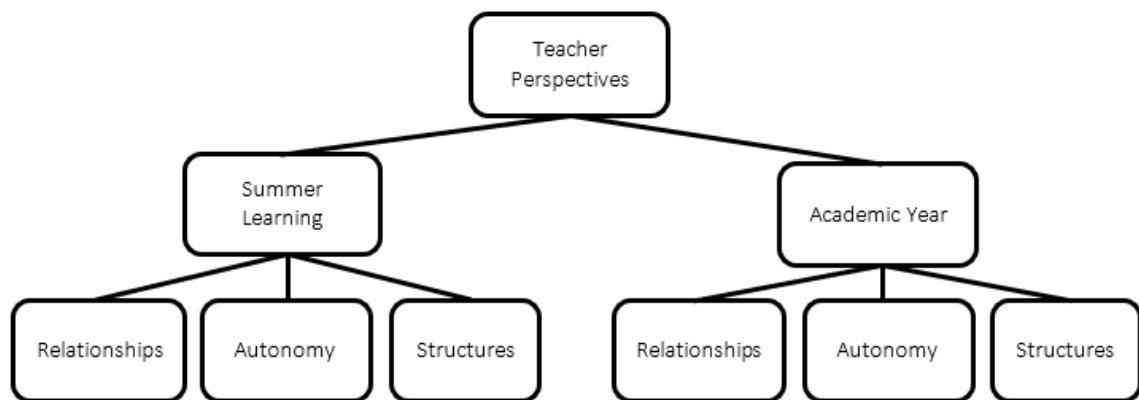
Note. Mind map showing the relationship between factors influencing teacher empowerment across contexts and cases

Thorough and careful analysis of the data, both inductively and deductively, showed common threads binding the experiences of the participants both within their cases and across their contexts a well as across the bounds of each case. Teachers described their experiences in both their summer learning positions and academic year positions relating to three themes: structure, relationships, and autonomy. The following section presents a cross-case analysis for each context through these themes.

Teachers' Experiences in a Summer Learning Program

The following section presents a cross-case analysis of teacher perspectives as they relate to structures, relationships, and autonomy in the context of the summer learning program Camp Ignite.

Relationships. Even though no interview questions specifically asked participants about their relationships with colleagues or evaluators in either context, all participants discussed relationships on some level. However, relationships dominated much of the data from Annie, Yvette, Nina, Rita, and Mae. Of these participants, all but Annie were graduate students at Weagle University, which hosted Camp Ignite, and were participating in coursework at the time of the study.

Yvette, Nina, Rita, and Mae were all either current or former students of Naomi's, and thus, had built relationships with her prior to Camp Ignite. Yvette and Mae had additional relationships at Camp Ignite, as they were both in class with Dr. Ingram. When Yvette spoke about Dr. Ingram's class she stated, "I felt empowered, I felt valued, and I felt like my ideas mattered… I also felt empowered [at Camp Ignite] because I felt supported by the other people that were in my class." Yvette valued relationships not only with Naomi and with Dr. Ingram as supervisors but also with her colleagues. "Yeah,

that's what it's all about," Yvette said. "That's what life is about. Write that down. Relationships." Mae described her supervisors at Camp Ignite as "approachable" and noted she felt "like a partner" in the day to day events of the programming. Those experiences, among others, prompted Mae to say, "Every teacher needs an experience like this" to "carry the hope" with them when they return to the classroom.

Similarly, Nina, and Rita spoke about their closeness with Naomi, equating the relationship to "a warm hug and a good cup of coffee" and "just like a big family." Yvette, Nina, Rita, and Mae all held supervisor/supervisee relationships with Naomi, Dr. Ingram, or both, yet they gushed about the comforts of those relationships. Naomi and Dr. Ingram were in positions of power but leveraged their power to empower their adult students.

Annie was one of two participants in the study who was not an active graduate student at Weagle University while working at Camp Ignite. She however, also highly valued the relationships she built and participated in the summer learning program because she viewed her work with Camp Ignite as a true partnership. She said:

> That got me thinking a lot about these connections between Camp Ignite and the connections between Weagle University and the professional development school and how all of this is connected and how all of these connections help out kids, not just in their education, but also in their ability to connect the community and the school.

Annie referred to the professional development school partnership between Magnolia County Public Schools and Weagle University, where the symbiotic relationship was designed to support students, school/district faculty and staff, teacher candidates,

graduate students, and university professors. She continued, "I got to know some more people from the university that I wouldn't have otherwise and made some connections hopefully that will continue on through." Annie felt valued by her colleagues at Weagle University.

Across each of these cases, the relationships fostered through Camp Ignite played a key role in the experiences of Yvette, Nina, Rita, Mae, and Annie. The depth and strength of those relationships empowered these educators and left them excited to work at Camp Ignite.

Autonomy. Another dominant theme that emerged during data analysis was one of autonomy. Seven of the eight participants heavily discussed the autonomy they felt while at Camp Ignite and how it made them feel. Some of the participants were able to name it as such, while others described their experience as one of freedom.

Initially, Rita felt overwhelmed by the opportunity to exercise autonomy at Camp Ignite. She recalled, "All I've been given is the power to do whatever I thought within [the] parameters [of] 'don't do something ridiculous.'" Rita asked Naomi, "What do I need to focus on?" and was told it was up to her to decide. Lissette and Nina worked together at Camp Ignite with a different group of students, but had a similar experience to Rita. Nina chose to implement Genius Hour one summer and a Makerspace the next and recalled how the opportunity at Camp Ignite influenced her choices during the academic year. She recalled, "I've had the experience with it here. How can I massage it and make it work? How can… I don't want to say 'justify…'" Nina felt safe to try new things at Camp Ignite. "You just take the risk!" she exclaimed.

Richard felt freedom to exercise his autonomy by moving at a pace that worked for both himself and his student campers. "Not having to attend to the standards on a… not to be beholden to it to a religious degree is freeing" which was echoed by Lissette and Rita. The opportunity to slow down, dig in, and explore learning with campers was a direct result of the autonomy afforded to the Camp Ignite instructors. Because they were in control of decision-making, they felt empowered to do what was best for their respective courses and campers.

Annie, Lissette, Mollie, and Mae all discussed the autonomy and freedom they felt at Camp Ignite, and how those feelings affected them. The researcher asked Lissette to think about any challenges she encountered at Camp Ignite and how her ability to make decisions played a part in that, noting:

I don't [have challenges], because even if there's a second of a challenge, you have the room to automatically just approach that challenge and take care of it. I really don't feel that there have been many challenges here because we were able to plan lessons about things that we want to. And we are able to, I don't know… What do I want to say? I don't walk away every day thinking about challenges the way that I do during the school year.

Mollie also reflected on the opportunities at Camp Ignite that were not available to her during the academic year, saying "[At] camp it's the flexibility, you get to try out things that you wouldn't normally either get to do in a school year." Mae and Annie both discussed their freedom to choose. Annie said, "The idea of freedom can be very freeing to someone who's had a lot of experience… and feels comfortable… I felt like Naomi gave us a lot of freedom to do whatever when she told me about the opportunity with

Camp Ignite." Mae echoed Annie's sentiment, "…but, just it's… you can choose. You can choose!" Instructional freedom had a significant positive impact on several participants' perspectives of their experiences.

Structures. The structure of Camp Ignite, a summer learning program, was different from that found in a typical school during the academic year. While there were two camp co-directors much like schools have principals and assistant principals, and students were grouped into grade-level groups and even attended classes with designated start and end times, the similarities in structure ended there.

Richard and Naomi both described Camp Ignite as having a flattened hierarchy of sorts. He felt confident he could use his voice, because while there were leaders, his opinion was welcomed, respected, and expected. He reflected:

No, I don't feel hindered at Camp Ignite. So I feel like if there was ever a big change that I wanted, even if it was structurally a large change, I feel like – not to assume my invitation – but if I were to come back next year, that even at the early auspices I could say "Hey, here's a thought or concern I have." Doesn't mean that it would be what I want, but I felt like it would be heard.

He noted he was comfortable speaking with the Camp Ignite co-directors and asking them questions and emphasized the structure at Camp Ignite "didn't feel heavy, top heavy. It felt like a community." Lissette echoed Richard's sentiments and noted, "There was almost this lack of hierarchy at Camp Ignite. Exactly, that's the big one. That's the big piece, yeah."

Mollie and Richard both commented on the small class size, or at least the small teacher to student ratio that existed at Camp Ignite. "In a classroom it's usually just you

and 22 kids. Here… maybe 20-30 kids and there's like eight of us [instructors in a room]." Camp Ignite's low teacher to student ratio took pressure off teachers.

Yvette reflected on how the structure of Camp Ignite had a trickle-down effect from her professor to her, to her students, and her freedom to make instructional choices at Camp Ignite. She realized that Dr. Ingram modeled instructional freedom for the class:

> She kind of ran her class the way we kind of ran the centers. She gave us the freedom to choose, and so it allowed us to choose and expand on what we wanted to learn about… So, it's like she just said, "Okay, this is your class. Learn what you wanna learn. I'm here to help and guide you. What do you wanna learn?" and it made us all like, "Oh, this is really cool. We get to learn whatever we wanna learn." We really dug in and learned. So, I think I really felt… I guess you could call that empowerment.

Yvette could learn what she wanted to learn, and she chose to structure her play centers around children learning what they wanted to learn. The autonomy she was granted due to this structural decision was freeing and empowering.

Teachers' Experiences During the Academic Year

The following section presents a cross-case analysis of teacher perspectives as they relate to structures, relationships, and autonomy in the context of the participants' schools for the academic year.

Relationships. Relationships, while highlighted by all participants, dominated the discussions with six of the eight participants. Each of the participants who spoke prevalently about the importance of relationships in their experience during the academic year taught in elementary schools.

169

Nina was a person who was introspective and found relationships to be paramount. She saw her relationships change as the leaders in her building also changed:

> Leadership can make or break a school, period. They set the tone. They set the tone for the entire thing. If there's a strong leader who cares about their staff, it's going to show. If there's a strong leader who doesn't care, that's going to show in a different way. And if there's a leadership that is not so strong in what they do and don't care, then that boat is not going to be as stable.

Nina looked for "mutual respect and treating me like the professional I am. Not cold hearted." When she elaborated on the importance of relationships, she said, "I feel like right now [the] lack of relationship keeps me from taking risks in the classroom." She felt targeted by her administrator and left her school at the end of the academic year of the study.

Lissette echoed Nina's sentiments about relationships and experience. As she reflected on the factors that influenced her empowerment, she claimed:

> It's who your leaders are. Yes, I really do think that makes a difference. I, like you, think empowerment is extremely important. And I'm one of those people, that if I did not have this [positive] experience [with my administration] the past four years, I would have changed schools immediately, at the end of my first year, or whichever year. So, I really do think that affects your experience a lot: who surrounds you. And it's not just administrators. It's who surrounds you on your team. I really feel that… who surrounds you at your school, in general, makes a big difference, I think.

Positive relationships affected participants' perspectives of empowerment and influenced teacher burnout and turnover, as well.

Rita also valued and discussed relationships in both contexts. She avoided the administrators in her first school, but at her new school she would "go up to their offices to say hi" and actively texted her principal. She, like Lissette, valued relationships with colleagues. "I really, really have a good connection with my co-teacher this year, and that has made the world of difference." Mae, too, felt close with her administration but also recognized professional boundaries, stating, "My principal, she's a leader; it gets done. And if it doesn't get done you will know about it, and that's okay." When asked if someone could lead and still empower people, she said, "My principal does and Camp Ignite did." Participant perspectives of their experiences in multiple learning contexts indicate that good leadership and empowerment of teachers are not mutually exclusive.

Mollie, like several other participants, left her school due to lack of relationships with her administrative team. At the time of the study, she felt she was in a better environment:

> I like my colleagues. I like who I work with. Which is important 'cause I have
> been on some teams where I'm like, "Can I shut my door please and not let them
> open it? I don't want to see you." But if you open it, I still will smile at you,
> 'cause I'm gonna be nice.

Mollie valued relationships in her building and recognized how relationships with her administration and colleagues affected her experience.

Yvette felt fearful at school, always concerned she might lose her job without notice or reason. "We just faked it," she said, "We just faked the smile. What else was

our alternative? Because it's like he is sitting back there taking notes," she said in reference to her headmaster. She lacked a relationship with her administration and was biding her time to quit her job until her youngest child graduated. "The plan is, hopefully, I can make it that long. Hopefully, I don't get fired. If I do, you know what? This too shall pass," she said.

Autonomy. One major theme that surfaced as teachers discussed their academic year experiences was how participants experienced autonomy. All of the participants discussed autonomy on some level, but it was prevalent among Annie, Nina, Rita, and Richard.

Annie felt "lucky" to work at her school, noting her administrative team "either trusted me or they were very open to the ideas I had." She noted she had media specialist friends at other schools "who are not able to make changes about the way they do things." However, Annie felt her autonomy was somewhat limited since the arrival of the new superintendent to Magnolia County Public Schools, as there was a newly formed office to approve her media purchases. She felt diminished with her limited autonomy and that she had to "explain why you're doing something when you shouldn't have to." The new, and in her opinion superfluous, hoops to jump through left her discouraged.

Richard, who like Annie, worked for Magnolia County Public Schools and at Magnolia Middle School, felt a frustration similar to his colleague. His administration asked him to implement a scripted curriculum purchased by the district. Richard doubted the quality of the program and felt frustrated because "there's not anyone checking to see if I'm doing it with fidelity, which is the… one of the principal reasons why I've been doing it with my version of fidelity." Richard was haunted knowing the autonomy he felt

was limited to what he could get away with behind the closed door of his classroom because, ultimately, the program did not address "what I consider one of the chief needs of these most fragile learners."

Nina and Rita each taught in different districts outside of MCPS. Nina shared that while her curriculum was not technically boxed and scripted, there was an expectation from her administrator to do things "a certain way" or else. "It's very hard to really get fired up about what you're doing," she said. The lack of autonomy left Nina feeling discouraged. Rita previously taught in MCPS but left partially because she felt so constrained by the scripted curriculum adopted by her school, where she felt "you just need to be a robot." In her current school, Rita still struggled with some scripted curricula, but felt she had the autonomy to make edits to the lessons and schedule as she saw fit for her students. "We decided we needed more writing time, so my admin said you can recreate your schedule; just tell your co-teachers what you need. So, I had the choice to switch it up." Her school used a scripted writing curriculum, one in which she disagreed with the instructional calendar, as well as the pacing. However, she noted, "I feel that I work in an environment where if I deviate from it, which we do, it would be okay."

Structures. The general structure of the school contexts for the participants were similar, as seven of the eight taught in K-5 or 6-8 public schools, and one taught in a K-12 private school. The schools were typical in that they had leadership teams comprised of a principal (or headmaster) and assistant principals. Students had a daily schedule as is common in K-12 education in the United States. Additionally, the structures that existed in each context were also similar in that school and/or district hierarchies added layers of

173

bureaucracy and contributed to pressure to perform. The structures did not provide spaces for teachers to use their voices, and as a result, most participants felt disempowered.

Mae felt the hierarchy in her school differed greatly from the hierarchy in her district. She discussed the "open door" policy of her principal but described the style of her superintendent as "I'm the boss and you're not." She felt overwhelmed by "things that came down from the district" in terms of scripted curriculum and programming as well as "all the demands, all the musts. You have to do it." Lissette described a similar situation, in which she felt supported at the local school level but actively disempowered by the power structure at the district level. Both Lissette and Mae taught in Magnolia County Public Schools. In Lissette's school, she described it as being "a very down-up approach" where teachers were vocal in decision-making. However, she noted, "We watch people in very high positions seem to not have a voice and so then it leaves me feeling discouraged that a teacher would ever have the chance to really, truly help change that."

Richard felt the structures outside of his building were constraining as well. "What do I do? And so far, my answer has been nothing. And that's what I find so frustrating. I don't know how to voice my specific critique or concern in a way that doesn't burn bridges." Richard was part of committees where he was expressly asked to share his opinions, but he noted that those opportunities were "only to talk about the questions that I'm being asked." Richard blamed himself for not taking risks using his voice but walked the tightrope of using his voice and maintaining employment. "My wife told me," he began, "long before I became a teacher that her friends would joke around and say that they keep you busy as a teacher so you won't complain, just because you're

so busy you don't have time to complain." He was certain using his voice would be ignored at the district level and structures were in place to minimize opportunities for teacher expression.

When Annie reflected on the structure in her school and district, she said, "There's all of these different levels of people telling a teacher how they need to teach something." Mollie had a similar experience with one of the administrators she worked for, "who was out to find something wrong. Like, he wanted to find a reason to comment" during an observation. Annie and Mollie both felt micromanaged. Additionally, Mollie had mixed feelings about being able to use her voice at both the school and district level. She was told, "This is a safe space" at school but noted the facial expressions of administrators sometimes contradicted that notion.

Yvette also felt constrained by the structures in her building. As a private school teacher, she was not part of a school district, but the headmaster was akin to a superintendent as the upper and lower schools each had principals. Yvette was frustrated by the lack of what she considered sensible structures in her building. Her relatively new headmaster "fired so many wonderful, wonderful teachers… and he's hired people who are not educators in their places." She felt that "boundary lines are getting skewed. We don't really know what all is expected from us." She felt discombobulated and confused and that the structures, or lack thereof, were "actually taking power away from us."

Relationships, autonomy, and structures of the academic year contexts all significantly influenced the experience of each of the teacher participants in the study.

Chapter Summary

After the within- and cross-case analyses, three themes were generated from the data: relationships, autonomy, and structures. The researcher found that regardless of context, these themes were central to the experiences of the participants of the study.

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the research design. Next, the researcher discusses the themes that emerged from the data analysis in relation to the literature. Then, implications for future research as well as practice for current administrators, teachers, and students are discussed. The chapter concludes with final thoughts about the study from the researcher.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate K-12 teacher perspectives of empowerment across contexts and the factors that influence those perspectives. Specifically, the study examined K-12 teacher perspectives of empowerment as they related to their practices in the context of their involvement in a summer learning program and in the context of their work as classroom teachers during the academic school year. Additionally, this study sought to identify factors that influenced teacher perspectives of their empowerment across contexts. The guiding research questions were:

1. What are K-12 teachers' perspectives of their experiences as instructors in a summer learning program?

2. How do K-12 teachers compare their experiences as instructors in a summer learning program to their experiences during the academic year?

3. What factors influence teachers' perspectives of their experiences across contexts?

This chapter consists of a summary, discussion, and implications of the study. First, the researcher presents a summary of the research design. Then, the researcher discusses the three themes that emerged from the data analysis as they relate to the review of the related literature and the theoretical underpinnings of the study. After the discussion sections, implications for teachers, administrators, district personnel, and researchers are explored. The chapter concludes with final thoughts from the researcher.

Summary of the Research Design

The researcher used a descriptive sociological multi-case study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006) to explore teacher perspectives of their experiences across the contexts of a summer learning program and their academic year appointments. Guided by Dewey's definition of experience (1916, 1938), the researcher realized each teacher's perspective would not only require individual reflection but would also differ from other participants. Therefore, each teacher was defined as a single, individual case.

A qualitative approach was used to capture teachers' perspectives of their experiences of empowerment across contexts. The researcher selected a multi-case study design over a single case study or quantitative methods so that she could capture a broader view of participant experiences. A quantitative study would not have accurately captured participant experiences because the review of the related literature did not uncover a data collection tool that met the requirements of this study. A single case method was not employed because it would only tell the story of one individual rather than show trends across multiple contexts. The design of the study allowed the researcher to investigate themes that superseded context and represent broader themes from a larger data set.

The researcher collected data through a series of two semi-structured interviews, each lasting 60-90 minutes on average. The researcher also collected artifacts in the form of journal entries and school documents; wrote field notes before, during, and after interviews; and wrote memos. Using thematic analysis, the researcher built codes, themes, and eventually, analytical concepts, or finalized themes, to interpret and discuss the results of the study.

Prior to the start of the study, the researcher reviewed the available literature focusing on teacher agency, teacher autonomy, teacher self-efficacy, and teacher empowerment. Each section of the review catalogued the details and research methods of each study and devised a working definition of each term based on the available studies. Ultimately the researcher determined for the purpose of this study, the term teacher empowerment was a connecting term that focused teachers' perspectives of their contextual conditions. To be empowered, teachers need the opportunity to enact agency, to have some degree of autonomy, and believe they are effective educators (Bogler & Nir, 2012; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Lightfoot, 1986; Short 1994; Short et al., 1994; Short & Rinehart, 1992).

Discussion

In reference to the literature review, several themes emerged during data analysis. While not all participants had the vocabulary and understanding of the terminology to name the phenomena specifically, they referenced their experiences of opportunities to enact agency, feelings of autonomy and self-efficacy, and their empowerment as a result of those experiences. Before discussing the emergent themes in the study, it is vital to reference the factors influencing those themes, as defined by the literature.

Teacher agency requires a person to possess a sense of purpose and a belief he or she can exert influence (King & Nomikou, 2018; Lasky, 2005; Pantic, 2017). Not too different from teacher agency, teacher autonomy is the opportunity to exercise decision-making or change-making abilities, contingent upon increased responsibility, accountability, and overall professionalism (Biesta et al., 2015; Honig & Rainey, 2012; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Little, 1995; Pearson & Moomaw, 2006; Rosalba Cárdenas,

2006; Shalem et al., 2018; Short, 1994). Teacher self-efficacy, while less obvious in the data than some of the other terms, is a teacher's feelings of being influential and possessing the ability to complete his or her job successfully (Bandura, 1997; Cantrell & Callaway, 2008; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Glackin & Hohenstein, 2018; Glackin, 2016; Klassen & Durksen, 2014; Perera et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Short, 1994; Somech & Drack-Zahavy, 2000).

The crux of the conversations between the researcher and the participants, however, focused on teachers' perspectives of empowerment. Teacher empowerment is a connecting term because it weaves together the experiences of agency, autonomy, and self-efficacy. It is context-dependent and focuses on participants' perspectives of their working conditions. Empowered teachers have opportunities to enact agency, have at least some degree of autonomy, and believe they are effective educators. The potential for empowerment exists in contexts where those in power not only allow these conditions to exist but also encourage teachers to take advantage of these conditions (Bolger & Nir, 2012; Bolger & Somech, 2004; Lightfoot, 1986; Short 1994; Short et al., 1994; Short & Rinehart, 1992).

Reflecting on the terms defined by the literature and the experiences of the participants; further review of artifacts, interview transcripts, and the within-case and cross-case analyses; three themes emerged during data analysis. Those themes are structures, autonomy, and relationships. Next, the researcher will discuss the themes in relation to the literature and the theoretical framework.

Theme 1: Structures

Teacher opportunities to enact agency are driven by the culture of the school and the relationships between the structures and actors in that space (King & Nomikou, 2018). For teachers to feel empowered, they must have the opportunity to enact agency. Therefore, empowered teachers are partially a product of the structures within their context. The structures that existed across the contexts significantly impacted the experiences of the teacher participants, especially as those experiences relate to their empowerment. The structure at Camp Ignite was considered a flattened hierarchy. Naomi described Camp Ignite in such a manner, and participants felt the effects of the less rigid structure, as compared to that of a typical K-12 school. Richard spoke to the accessibility of Camp Ignite administrators such as Naomi and her co-director. In his reflection, Richard described feeling comfortable asking questions, regardless of content. He also noticed student campers were in direct contact with camp leadership whenever students wanted to be. There were no gatekeepers, and Richard appreciated knowing he could go directly to Naomi with any questions or concerns. Rita and Nina also alluded to the structure of Camp Ignite, as they both described their feelings of closeness with Naomi. Rita and Nina described Naomi and their experiences at Camp Ignite as "family," and "a warm hug and a good cup of coffee," respectively.

Both Mae and Lissette discussed structure as it affected their experiences in their academic year contexts. Mae mentioned that her principal shielded her from the actions of the district, while Lissette discussed a "down-up" approach in which teachers had a significant level of input in school decisions. Mae and Lissette both worked for Magnolia County Public Schools with a superintendent whom Mae referred to as "dictatorial." Yet

due to the structures in their local school contexts, both participants felt empowered, even if minimally. The structures in place at the district level left both Mae and Lissette feeling overwhelmed. However, due to the work of their local school administrations to implement structures that honored teacher voice, they were not as disempowered as other participants.

Theme 2: Autonomy

One effect of the ongoing effort to reform schools, since at least the 1960s, is the limiting of teachers' autonomy. This limiting of instructional decision making is sometimes referred to as enforcing an autocracy rather than using pedagogy (Pinar, 2012). A primary feature of teacher autonomy is the power to make decisions or exercise discretion (Honig & Rainey, 2012; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Strong & Yoshida, 2014; Torres, 2014). The participants of the study openly reflected on their feelings regarding opportunities to act autonomously in their experiences at both Camp Ignite and in the academic year school contexts. All teacher participants in the study expressed they experienced the freedom to act autonomously while at Camp Ignite.

Mollie discussed how her autonomy varied between her school locations because her time was split across three schools as the district gifted teacher. She reflected on her Friday schedule, which she called her "design day," with contentment. Mollie loved the freedom she had to make instructional choices for her students and was energized by the opportunity to be creative and make decisions based on her professional judgment. She felt autonomous because of the degree to which she had freedom to make decisions in her classroom (Vangrieken et al., 2017).

Annie felt her autonomy being stripped away in her local school. While she felt she had the opportunity to make more decisions than some of her other media specialist colleagues, she was bothered by the new requirements and levels of approval she faced when purchasing materials in the media center. She felt disempowered because, as a media specialist, she was closer than other teachers at Magnolia Middle School to the sphere of influence of her superintendent. She felt pointedly subordinate as both a woman and a person working in a feminized profession where workers are expected to be "nurturing, passive, and dependent" on others (Kelly & Nihlen, 1996). While at Camp Ignite, however, Annie merely requested books to be purchased for literature circles, and the Camp Ignite staff made that happen. She was given power to make instructional and purchasing decisions and in turn, felt more empowered.

Theme 3: Relationships

According to Dewey (1916) "the *measure* of the value of an experience lies in the perception of relationships or continuities to which it leads up" (p. 140, emphasis in original). Yvette's experience amplified Dewey's work, noting "that's what it's all about… write that down. Relationships." Pantic (2017) stated relationships were the most important factor regarding teachers exercising their agency. According to Calvert (2016), teacher agency is affected by a few factors, including relationships with colleagues and administrators. Non-hierarchical relationships foster teacher collaboration and empowerment, and ultimately, student success (Balyer et al., 2017). Based on the literature, it is unsurprising that relationships and their power were discussed by all participants as being important to their perspectives of empowerment.

As participants described their experiences at both Camp Ignite and in the context of their academic year positions, one of the most impactful factors of their overall feelings of empowerment – regardless of context – was relationships. In their interviews with the researcher, participants discussed the depth of their relationships with their colleagues and their administrators. Positive relationships left participants feeling more empowered, while negative relationships left participants feeling less empowered.

Yvette's experiences showed the starkest contrast. When she reflected on her time at Camp Ignite, Yvette discussed how energized she felt as a result of her relationships with Dr. Ingram and the Camp Ignite staff. Conversely, her negative relationship with her school headmaster left Yvette scared for her job on a daily basis. Even though she had opportunities to act autonomously in her classroom, she felt actively disempowered. The effects of her negative relationship eclipsed the benefits she felt from the autonomy she was afforded in her classroom.

The three themes that emerged from the data, much like the terminology investigated in Chapter 2, were not disconnected. The structures in place in local contexts affected the opportunities for teachers to build relationships with their administrators. Positive relationships with administrators provided participants with experiences that led to their self-efficacy and the belief they were viewed as professionals, while negative, combative, or neglected relationships resulted in a decrease in teachers' empowerment and sometimes a decrease in teachers' self-efficacy. The opportunity to act autonomously affected teachers' perspectives of their experiences, as well. The complex interaction of structures, autonomy, and relationships built an environment that either advanced, sustained, or diminished teachers' perspectives of their empowerment.

Implications for Teachers, Administrators, District Personnel, and Researchers

The research reviewed at the time of the study presented a gap in factors that affect teacher perspectives of empowerment across contexts. The following section details implications of this study as they relate to teachers, school administrators, district personnel, and future research.

Implications for Teachers

The teacher participants in the study were forthcoming with their perspectives and did not hesitate to be blunt with the researcher. When reviewing the cross-case analysis, it became clear that teachers who felt disempowered would look for ways to make change or ways to exit their position. Both Mollie and Rita referred to times in their careers where they felt disempowered in their local school contexts and had since made changes. Yvette was only planning on staying at her school as long as her son was enrolled.

Some participants chose to make change from within. Richard spoke of his opportunities to use his voice, albeit carefully. Lissette felt empowered to use her voice, as well. Based on the experiences of the participants, the researcher recommends that teachers focus on building relationships with their colleagues, their administrators, and their district leadership where appropriate. Strong, positive relationships will act as the foundation for the other conditions that facilitate teacher empowerment. In addition to building positive relationships, the researcher also recommends that teachers seek opportunities to use their voices to speak for the needs of themselves, their colleagues, and their students, or create opportunities to use their voices if they do not exist. If conditions do not permit opportunities for teachers to speak out for an extended period of

185

time, the researcher recommends finding a school context where one does feel empowered.

Another recommendation is for teachers to be leaders, whether formally or informally, in their learning communities, such as content departments or grade levels, and work to drive changes they see as necessary based on their contexts and their contextual goals. Teachers who have close relationships with their colleagues can work together to support each other to exercise their agency and increase teacher self-efficacy. Empowered teachers will be more likely to exercise agency and feel safe to make efforts toward changes in hopes of improving student achievement.

Implications for Administrators

The results of this study indicate that teacher perspectives of their relationships with their school administrators significantly affected their perceived levels of empowerment. Local school administrators typically have less decision-making power than their counterparts at the central office, but they can make decisions about how they manage and support teachers, especially the teachers they evaluate. These decisions affect administrator actions toward their teachers and can influence the depth and quality of the administrator-teacher relationship. Local school administrators are the leaders in schools every day working with teachers, so the relationships they foster with teachers, or fail to foster, play a significant role in the morale of those teachers. The claim that management style, attitude, and general presence of one person – a school administrator – can make or break a teacher's experience in a school was echoed by more than one participant.

The researcher suggests local school administrators focus on providing teachers with opportunities to use their voices. Those opportunities will strengthen administrators' relationships with their teachers, which can somewhat flatten the hierarchy in schools and disrupt the patriarchal structure that subordinates teachers (Lather, 1992). Administrators should use their own autonomy to create structures, both formal and informal, that allow space for teachers to use their voices. Structures may include, but are not limited to, forums for teachers to share concerns without fear of retaliatory action, regular "office hours" for teachers to access administrators without scheduling a meeting, and teacher-led task forces to address concerns brought up in forums, "office hours," or through other modes of communication. While maintaining appropriate boundaries, administrators should create a culture of trust, openness, and honesty with the teachers they support to expand their role from merely "evaluator" to one focused on growing the capacity of their teachers. When teachers can advocate for their needs and trust their voices are being heard by their superiors, the hierarchy in schools will continue to be flattened. The opportunity for teachers to use their voices could ultimately increase feelings of self-efficacy and empowerment. The participants who reported positive relationships with their administrators were more empowered than those who did not report positive relationships. In cases of positive relationships, participants shared the desire to communicate with their administrators or supervisors outside of work hours, stopping by their offices to say hello, and referring to some as family.

When administrators actively create forums for teachers to speak out and feel heard, and then subsequently build richer relationships with their teachers, they will increase their knowledge of the professional strengths and areas for growth of those

teachers. Administrators will then have an opportunity to differentiate their support for their teachers and create opportunities for teachers to grow without their feeling threatened due to extra attention from an evaluator. When administrators intentionally create space for their teachers to use their voices, they can increase the autonomy of those teachers that can then, in turn, increase a teacher's self-efficacy. Additionally, while administrators may encounter difficulties in formally changing some structures due to their own positioning in the school district's hierarchy, informal changes in structures will extend the benefits of the flattened hierarchy like the one that existed at Camp Ignite. Administrators who cultivate productive relationships with and establish structures that support their teachers will build the capacity of their teachers as leaders, thus impacting the staff as a whole and potentially extending the effects of empowered teachers and their self-efficacy toward student achievement (Cantrell & Callaway, 2008; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Short, 1994; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2000).

Implications for District Personnel

Depending on the size of the school district, implications for school administrators and district personnel might be the same. Regardless of the size of the district, the implications do intersect because district personnel are the administrators of school administrators. The researcher recommends district personnel focus on both capacity-building and relationship-building with teachers. However, the more distinct opportunity for district personnel to empower teachers is through the regulation of structures, particularly hierarchical structures.

The way hierarchies are structured and enforced can, and often do, result in the patriarchal subordination of teachers, as schools play a role in the production of

188

inequality between teachers – especially female teachers – and school leadership (Kelly & Nihlen, 1996). Hierarchies, policies, and mandates in both schools and school districts have a trickle-down effect that may or may not reach teachers. For example, Yvette's school headmaster was so overbearing that her direct relationship affected her daily work and life. Yvette's proximity to her headmaster heightened her awareness of her low placement in the organizational hierarchy. Yvette was directly affected by the lack of relationship with her headmaster, who acted as a cross between a principal and a superintendent. Meanwhile, the seven other teacher participants worked in larger school districts with multiple layers of school and district level administration. Several teacher participants directly felt the effects of their superintendents. Their lack of voice was clear in the top-down decisions, even though those decisions were sometimes filtered through their principals. Mae and Lissette gushed about their relationships with their principals, and even referred to being "shielded" from some of the "mandates" from "the district" as the teachers referred to district level administration. The researcher suggests that district personnel investigate their hierarchical, and sometimes patriarchal, structures, and look for opportunities to create alternative or supporting structures. These new structures can create spaces for teachers to build positive relationships with district personnel, voice their needs and concerns for the betterment of the student experience, and act as change agents for the district as a whole.

Camp Ignite had a power structure, as do many organizations, but it was intentionally designed for teacher voices to be heard and applied to practices within camp. While most, if not all, school districts in the United States are larger than Camp Ignite, there is something to be gleaned from the success of the camp regarding the

189

number of teachers who felt empowered within that context. Teachers and other staff members had access to those in power. Even when a chain of command is necessary in a large organization, teachers can still feel heard when they feel connected to those in power and feel they are being treated professionally as indicated by their opportunities to act autonomously and enact agency. The researcher recommends school districts review their power structures, their mandates, and how they build relationships between the central office and local schools. Teachers are valuable assets to schools and school systems. Loosening rigid structures where possible could provide opportunities for teachers to act as change agents in their schools, increase teacher empowerment, and likely increase teacher retention. Empowered teachers committed to their school contexts could strengthen communities and positively affect student achievement and graduation rates.

Implications for Future Research

Demands for school reform in the United States have been documented for well over a century. From the late 1800s (Cremin, 1964; Lagemann, 1996) to the 1960s (Pinar, 2012), to *No Child Left Behind* in the 2000s (USDOE, 2002), to 2021, during the COVID-19 Pandemic (EdResearch for Recovery, 2020), school reform has perpetually been a topic of discussion. The research regarding teacher empowerment, especially in recent years, has been minimal. Research investigating the factors that influence teacher empowerment across contexts is seemingly nonexistent.

The researcher recommends further studies investigating the factors that influence teacher perspectives of their empowerment. The more data that is compiled regarding teacher experience, the better argument to be made to make changes to the contextual

factors that affect teachers each day. Along with additional research concerning teacher perspectives, the researcher suggests future researchers consider investigating the relationship between teacher empowerment and student achievement.

Further recommendations include using a feminist theoretical framework to study teacher empowerment. Even though the field of education is dominated by women, men often hold positions of power and authority (Kelly & Nihlen, 1996). In addition, schools perpetuate the patriarchy by design. Classroom teachers are subordinate and subservient to their school administrators with few opportunities to exercise their voice or influence. According to Lather (1987), the subordination of teachers to administrators is built into the role of classroom teacher. Walkerdine (1987) noted that "as women at work, we are used to performing" and "girls are conditioned into passivity," and later asked, "How come, for many women, the powerful part of themselves has been so split off as to feel that it belongs to someone else?" (p. 57). The structure of schooling is one that requires teachers, most of whom are women, to give their power to administrators. While there is a slightly greater percentage of female than male administrators in public schools, the number of male administrators is disproportionate to the number of male classroom teachers (US Department of Education [USDOE], 2004). With these considerations in mind, the researcher recommends conducting studies about teacher empowerment using feminism as the theoretical framework.

Concluding Thoughts

The purpose of this study was to investigate K-12 teacher perspectives of empowerment across contexts and the factors that influence those perspectives. Specifically, the study examined K-12 teacher perspectives of empowerment as they

related to their practices in the context of their involvement in a summer learning program and in the context of their work as classroom teachers during the academic school year. Additionally, this study sought to identify factors that influenced teacher perspectives of their empowerment across contexts.

The review of the related literature highlighted research investigating teacher agency, teacher autonomy, teacher self-efficacy, and teacher empowerment. At the time of the study, the researcher was unable to locate any studies specifically investigating factors of teacher empowerment that reached across contexts. The literature specifically investigating empowerment attempted to quantify empowerment using a scale, but because the majority of those studies were quantitative, many details were left unknown. The gap in the research made space for this study.

The perspectives of participants were captured through a series of semi-structured interviews, review of journals, field notes, participant-provided artifacts, and memos. Using the lens of experience and both inductive and deductive methods of thematic analysis, three major themes emerged to the researcher: structures, autonomy, and relationships. The themes, much like the terms investigated in the literature review, are connected, and one depends on the other with varied levels of intensity. To experience empowerment, teachers must have solid, positive relationships with their administrators, must have the autonomy to make professional decisions, and their context must be structured to allow for and support the prior two conditions.

One limit of this study is the small number of participants, as the stories of eight individual teachers, who were mostly white, middle to upper-middle class, women in the southeastern United States, do not adequately represent the nationwide population of

teachers. Another limit was the researcher's ability to maintain participant confidentiality because the Camp Ignite community was small and close-knit. It is highly likely the study participants knew each other, which may have affected their comfort in sharing the details of their experiences. Additionally, the study was limited by the closeness of the participants to the researcher, as all were colleagues at Camp Ignite and many were graduate school classmates of the researcher. With these limitations in mind, this research is the start of an opportunity for future researchers to investigate the stories of other teachers, and eventually make recommendations for broader school reform.

Teachers who feel empowered are more effective, productive, and content in their work than those who are not. As a profession that has historically been hierarchical and patriarchal, it is past time to dismantle the structures that restrict or silence the voices, expertise, and leadership of the educators at the center of the profession. Keeping in mind the impact that structures, autonomy, relationships, and context have on teachers' experiences in schools, it is time to rebuild schools to ensure they are designed to empower teachers. For the sake of students, teachers, and the future of the teaching profession, the empowerment of teachers is not only advised, it is essential.

References

Afterschool, A. (2010). America After 3PM Special Report on Summer: *Missed*

   Opportunities, Unmet Demand. Afterschool Alliance.

Allen, L. Q. (2018). Teacher leadership and the advancement of teacher agency. *Foreign*

   language annals, 2018(51), 240-250. https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12311

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Clinical Practice Commission.

   (2018). *A pivot toward clinical practice, its lexicon, and the renewal of educator*

   preparation. Washington, DC: Author. https://aacte.org/professional-

   development-and-events/clinical-practice-commission-press-conference

American Association of State Colleges and Universities Teacher Preparation Task

   Force. (2017). *Preparing teachers in today's challenging context: Key issues,*

   policy directions, and implications for leaders of AASCU universities. Author.

   https://www.aascu.org/AcademicAffairs/TeacherEdReport.pdf

Auerbach, C.F., & Silverstein, L.B. (2003). *Qualitative data: An introduction to coding*

   and analysis. New York University Press.

Avidov-Ungar, A., & Arviv-Elyashiv, R. (2018). Teacher perceptions of empowerment

   and promotion during reforms. *International Journal of Educational*

   Management, 32(1), 155-170. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-01-2017-0002

Ayers, L., Kavanaugh, K., & Knafl, K. A. (2003). Within-case and across-case

   approaches to qualitative data analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 13*(6), 871-

   883. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732303255359

Balyer, A., Özcan, K., & Yildiz, A. (2017). Teacher empowerment: School administrator roles. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research, 70*(1), 1-18. https://ejer.com/tr

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W. H. Freeman and Company.

Bandura, A. (2006). Toward a psychology of human agency. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 1*(2), 164-180. http://journals.sagepub.com/home/pps

Berliner, D. C., & Glass, G. V. (Eds.). (2014). *50 myths and lies that threaten America's public schools: The real crisis in education.* Teachers College Press.

Biesta, G., Priestley, M., & Robinson, S. (2015). The role of beliefs in teacher agency. *Teachers and Teaching, 21*(6), 624-640. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2015.1044325

Biesta, G., Priestley, M., & Robinson, S. (2017). Talking about education: Exploring the significance of teachers' talk for teacher agency. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 49*(1), 38-54. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2016.1205143

Blount. J. M. (2018). Individuality, freedom, and community: Ella Flagg Young's quest for teacher empowerment. *History of Education Quartlerly, 58*(2), 175-198. https://doi.org/10.1.1017/heq.2018.1

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2010). *Qualitative research in education: An introduction to theory and methods* (3rd ed.). Allyn & Bacon.

Bogler, R., & Somech, A. (2004). Influence of teacher empowerment on teachers' organizational commitment, professional commitment and organizational citizenship behavior in schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20*(2004), 277-289. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2004.02.003

Bogler, R., & Nir, A. E. (2012). The importance of teachers' perceived organizational support to job satisfaction: What's empowerment got to do with it? *Journal of Educational Administration, 50*(3), 287-206. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231211223310

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal, 9*(2), 27-40. https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027

Briggs, C. (1986). *Learning how to ask: A sociolinguistic appraisal of the role of the interview in social science research* (Reprint. ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Calvert, L. (2016). *Moving from compliance to agency: What teachers need to make professional learning work.* Learning Forward and NCTAF. https://learningforward.org/publications/teacher-agency

Cantrell, S. C., & Callaway, P. (2008). High and low implementers of content literacy instruction: Portraits of teacher efficacy. *Teacher and Teacher Education, 24*(2008), 1739-1750. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2008.02.020

Castillo-Montoya, M. (2016). Preparing for interview research: The interview protocol refinement framework. *The Qualitative Report, 21*(5) 811-831. https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr

Close, K. & Amrein-Beardsley, A. (2018). Learning from what doesn't work in teacher evaluation. *Phi Delta Kappan, 100*(1), 15-19. https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721718797115

Cremin, L. A. (1964). *The transformation of the school: Progressivism in American education, 1876-1957.* Alfred A. Knopf.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.* (3ʳᵈ ed.). Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W., Hanson, W. E., Plano, V. L. C., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative research designs: Selection and implementation. *The Counseling Psychologist, 35*(2), 236-264. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000006287390

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.* (5ᵗʰ ed.). Sage Publications.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2009). Recognizing and enhancing teacher effectiveness. *The International Journal of Educational and Psychological Assessment, 3*(1), 1-24. https://sites.google.com/site/tijepa2012/home

Darling-Hammond, L., & Rothman, R. (2015). *Teaching in the flat world*. Teachers College Press.

Del Grecco, R., Bernadowski, C., & Parker, S. (2018). Using illustrations to depict preservice science teachers' self-efficacy: a case study. *International Journal of Instruction, 11*(2), 75-88. https://doi.org/10.12973/iji.2018.1126a

Dewey, J. (1897). *My pedagogic creed*. E. L. Kellogg & Co.

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education.* The Free Press.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. MacMillan.

EdResearch for Recovery. (2020, June). *Schools practices to address student learning loss* (Brief No. 1). Allensworth, E. & Schwartz, N.

Emirbayer, M., & Mische, A. (1998). What is agency? *American Journal of Sociology, 103*(4), 962-1023. https://doi.org/10.1086/231294

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 12*(2), 219-245. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405284363

Freeman, M., deMarrais, K. D., Preissle, J., Roulston, K., & St. Pierre, E. (2007). Standards of evidence in qualitative research: An incitement to discourse. *Educational Researcher, 36*(1), 25-32. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X06298009

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed.). Continuum.

Frost, D. (2006). The concept of 'agency' in leadership for learning. *Leading & Managing, 12*(2), 19-28. http://www.acel.org.au/acel/ACELWEB/ACELWEB/Publications/Leading___Managing.aspx

Fu, G., & Clarke, A. (2017). Teacher agency in the Canadian context: Linking the how and the what. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 43*(5), 581-593. https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2017.1355046

Galman, S. C. (2016). *The good, the bad, and the data: Shane the lone ethnographer's basic guide to qualitative data analysis.* Routledge.

Gerring, J. (2004). What is a case study and what is it good for? *The American Political Science Review, 98*(2), 341-354. https://www.jstor.org/journal/amerpoliscierevi

Gibson, S., & Dembo, M. H. (1984). Teacher efficacy: A construct validation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 76*(4), 569-582. https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/edu/index.aspx

Glackin, M. (2016). 'Risky fun' or 'authentic science'? How teachers' beliefs influence their practice during a professional development programme on outdoor learning.

International *Journal of Science Education, 38*(3), 409-433.

https://doi.org/10.1080/09500693.2016.1145368

Glackin, M., & Hohenstein, J. (2018). Teachers' self-efficacy: progressing qualitative

analysis. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education, 41*(3), 271-

290. https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2017.1295940

Gonzalez, A., Peters, M. L., Orange, A., & Grigsby, B. (2017). The influence of high-

stakes testing on teacher self-efficacy and job-related stress. *Cambridge Journal*

of Education, 47(4), 513-531. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2016.1214237

Hall, J. (2017). *Class lecture: Data analysis.*

Hancock, D. R., & Algozzine, B. (2006). *Doing case study research: A practical guide*

for beginning researchers. Teachers College Press.

Hess, F. M. (2010). *The same thing over and over: How school reformers get stuck in*

yesterday's ideas. Harvard University Press.

Hökkä, P., Vähäsantanen, K., & Mahlakaarto, S. (2017). Teacher educators' collective

professional agency and identity – transforming marginality to strength. *Teaching*

and Teacher Education, 63(2017), 36-46.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.12.001

Honig, M. I., & Rainey, L. R. (2012). Autonomy and school improvement: What do we

know and where do we go from here? *Educational Policy, 26*(3), 465-495.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904811417590

Howe, A. C., & Stubbs, H. S. (1997). Empowering science teachers: A model for

professional development. *Journal of Science Teacher Education, 8*(3), 167-182.

https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1009487417488

Hyslop-Margison, E. J., & Sears, A. M. (2010). Enhancing teacher performance: The role

    of professional autonomy. *Interchange (0826-4805), 41*(1), 1-15.

    https://doi.org/10.1007/s10780-010-9106-3

Iancu, A. E., Rusu, A., Maroiu, C., Pacurar, R., & Maricutoiu, L. P. (2018). The

    effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing teacher burnout: a meta-analysis.

    Educational Psychology Review, 30(2018), 373-396.

    https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-017-9420-8

Ingersoll, R. M., & May, H. (2011). The minority teacher shortage: Fact or fable? *The*

    Phi Delta Kappan, 93(1), 62-65. https://journals.sagepub.com/home/pdk

Kelly, G. P., & Nihlen, A. S. (1996). Schooling and the reproduction of patriarchy:

    Unequal workloads, unequal rewards. In D. H. Kelly (Ed.), *International feminist*

    perspectives on education reform: The work of Gail Paradise Kelly, (pp. 41-59).

    Garland Publishing.

King, H. & Nomikou, E. (2018). Fostering critical teacher agency: the impact of a

    science capital pedagogical approach. *Pedagogy, Culture, & Society, 26*(1), 87-

    103. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2017.1353539

Klassen, R. M., & Durksen, T. L. (2014). Weekly self-efficacy and work stress during the

    teaching practicum: A mixed methods study. *Learning and Instruction, 33*(2014).

    158-169. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2014.05.003

Klassen, R. M., Tze, V. M. C., Betts, S. M., & Gordon, K. A. (2011). Teacher efficacy

    research 1998-2009: Signs of progress or unfulfilled promise? *Educational*

    Psychology Review, 23(2011), 21-43. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-010-9141-8

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt:

Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. *Educational Researcher, 35*(7), 3-12.

https://www.jstor.org/stable/3876731

Lagemann, E. C. (1996). Experimentation with education: John Dewey and Ella Flagg

Young at the University of Chicago. *American Journal of Education, 104*(3), 171-

185. https://journals.uchicago.edu

Lasky, S. (2005). A sociocultural approach to understanding teacher identity, agency and

professional vulnerability in a context of secondary school reform. *Teaching and

Teacher Education, 21*(2005), 899-916.

https://www.journals.elsevier.com/teaching -and-teacher-education

Lather, P. (1987). The Absent presence: Patriarchy, capitalism, and the nature of teacher

work. In L. Stone (Ed.) *The education feminism reader* (pp. 1-13). Routledge.

Lather, P. (1992). Critical frames in educational research: Feminist and post-structural

perspectives. *Theory Into Practice, 31*(2), 87-99.

http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/htip20

LeCompte, M. D., & Schensul, J. J. (1999). *Analyzing and interpreting ethnographic

data.* AltaMira Press.

Lightfoot, S. L. (1986). On goodness in schools: Themes of empowerment. *Peabody

Journal of Education, 63*(3), 9-28.

https://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/faculty/pje/index.php

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1986) But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity

in naturalistic evaluation. In *New directions for program evaluation*. (Vol. 30, pp.

73-84). Jossey-Bass.

Little, D. (1995). Learning as dialogue: The dependence of learner autonomy on teacher

    autonomy. *System, 23*(2), 175-181. https://www.journals.elsevier.com /system

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job Burnout. *Annual Review of*

    Psychology, 52(1), 397-422. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev/psych.52.1.397

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Medel-Añonuevo, C., & Bochynek, B. (1995). The international seminar of women's

    education and empowerment. In C. Medel-Añonuevo (Ed.), *Women, education,*

    and empowerment: Pathways toward autonomy. UNESCO Institute for

    Education.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education.*

    Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.*

    Jossey-Bass.

Ninkovic, S. R., & Floric, O. C. K. (2018). Transformational school leadership and

    teacher self-efficacy as predictors or perceived collective teacher efficacy.

    Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 46(1), 49-64.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143216665842

Pantic, N. (2017). An exploratory study of teacher agency for social justice. Teaching and

    Teacher Education, 66(2017), 219-230. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.04.008

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4. ed., [rev. ed. of the

    author's 'Qualitative evaluation methods'] ed.). Sage.

Pearson, L. C., & Moomaw, W. (2006). Continuing validation of the teaching autonomy

    scale. *The Journal of Educational Research, 100*(1), 44-51.

    https://www.jstor.org/journal/jeducresearch

Perera, H. N., Granziera, H., & McIlveen, P. (2018). Profiles of teacher personality and

    relations with teacher self-efficacy, work engagement, and job satisfaction.

    Personality and Individual Differences, 120(2018), 171-178.

    https://doi.org/10.1016.j.paid.2017.08.034

Philpott, C., & Oates, C. (2017). Teacher agency and professional learning communities;

    what can Learning Rounds in Scotland teach us? *Professional Development in*

    Education, 43(3), 318-333. https://doi.org/10.1080.19415257.2016.1180316

Pinar, W. F. (2012). *What is curriculum theory?* [2nd ed.]. Routledge.

Popham, W. J. (2004). *America's "failing" schools: How parents and teachers can cope*

    with 'No Child Left Behind'. RoutledgeFalmer.

Prasad, P. (2005). *Crafting qualitative research: Working in the postpositivist traditions*.

    M.E. Sharpe.

Rankin, J. G. (2018). How to help teachers win the burnout war: Five ways school

    leaders can be powerful allies for overwhelmed teachers. *Educational Leadership,*

    75(9), 28-32. http://www.ascd.org

Roberts, J. W. (2005). Disney, Dewey, and the death of experience in education.

    Education and Culture, 21(2), 12-30. https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/eandc

Rosalba Cárdenas, R. (2006). Considerations on the role of teacher autonomy. *Colombian*

    Applied Linguistics Journal, 0(8),183-202.

    https://revistas.udistrital.edu.co/ojs/index.php/calj

Roulston, K. (2010). *Reflective interviewing: A guide to theory and practice.* Sage.

Seed, A. (2006). Making empowerment and collaboration part of the lives of highly

    qualified team teachers. Middle School Journal, 37(5), 40-44.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/00940771.2006.11461553

Shalem, Y., De Clercq, F., Steinberg, C., & Koornhof, H. (2018). Teacher autonomy in

    times of standardised lesson plans: The case of a primary school language and

    mathematics intervention in South Africa. *Journal of Educational Change,*

    2018(19), 205-222. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-018-9318-3

Short, P. M. (1994). Defining teacher empowerment. *Education, 144*(4), 488-492.

    https://go.galegroup.com

Short, P. M., & Rinehart, J. S. (1992). School participant empowerment scale:

    Assessment of level of empowerment within the school environment. *Educational*

    and Psychological Measurement, 52, 951-960.

    https://journals.sagepub.com/home/epm

Short, P. M., Greer, J. T., & Melvin, W. M. (1994) Creating empowered schools: Lessons

    in change, *Journal of Educational Research, 32*(4), 38-52.

    https://doi.org/10.1108/09578239410069106

Simons, H. (2009). *Case study research in practice.* SAGE Publications.

Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2007). Dimensions of teacher self-efficacy and relations

    with strain factors, perceived collective teacher efficacy, and teacher burnout.

    Journal of Educational Psychology, 99(3), 611-625. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-

    0663.99.3.611

Somech, A., & Drach-Zahavy, A. (2000). Understanding extra-role behavior in schools: the relationships between job satisfaction, sense of efficacy, and teachers' extra-role behavior. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 16*(5-6), 649-659. https://www.journals.elsevier.com/teaching-and-teacher-education

Stolk, M. J., Bulte, A. M. W., de Jong, O., & Pilot, A. (2016). A framework for empowering teachers for teaching and designing context-based chemistry education. In R. Taconis, P. den Brok, & A. Pilot (Eds.), *Teachers creating context-based learning environments in science* (pp. 191-211). Sense Publishers.

Stone, L. (1994). Introducing education feminism. In L. Stone (Ed.) *The education feminism reader* (pp. 1-13). Routledge.

Stromquist, N. P. (1995). The theoretical and practical bases for empowerment. In C. Medel-Añonuevo (Ed.), *Women, education, and empowerment: Pathways toward autonomy.* UNESCO Institute for Education.

Strong, L. E. G., & Yoshida, R. K. (2014). Teachers' autonomy in today's educational climate: Current perceptions from an acceptable instrument. *Educational Studies, 50*(2), 123-145. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2014.880922

Suzuki, L. A., Ahluwalia, M. K., Arora, A. K., & Mattis, J. S. (2007). The pond you fish in determines the fish you catch: Exploring strategies for qualitative data collection. *The Counseling Psychologist, 35*(2), 295-327. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000006290983

Tao, J., & Gao, X. (2017). Teacher agency and identity commitment in curricular reform. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 63*(2017), 346-355. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.01.010

Torres, A. C. (2014). "Are we architects or construction workers?" re-examining teacher autonomy and turnover in charter schools. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 22*(124) https://epaa.asu.edu

Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Trust, T. (2017). Motivation, empowerment, and innovation: Teachers' beliefs about how participating in the Edmodo math subject community shapes teaching and learning. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education, 49*(1-2), 16-30. https://doi.org/10.1080/15391523.2017.1291317

Tsang, K. K. & Liu, D. (2016). Teacher demoralization, disempowerment, and school administration. *Qualitative Research in Education, 5*(2), 200-225. https://doi.org/10.17583/qre.2016.1883

US Census Bureau. (2019). *QuickFacts*. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/map/GA/IPE120219

US Department of Education. (2002). No child left behind act. (Public Law No. 107-110). Author.

US Department of Education. (2015). Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Pub. L. No. 114-95 § 114 Stat. 1177 (2015-2016). https://www.ed.gov/essa

US Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics. (2004). *Public school principal data file.* https://nces.ed.gov

Uzun, T. (2018). A study of correlations between perceived supervisor support, organizational identification, organizational citizenship behavior, and burnout at

schools. *European Journal of Educational Research, 7*(3), 501-511.

    http://www.eu-jer.com/

van der Heijden, H. R. M. A., Geldens, J. J. M., Beijaard, D., & Popeijus, H. L. (2015).

    Characteristics of teachers as change agents. *Teachers and Teaching, 21*(6), 681-

    699. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2015.1044328

Vangrieken, K., Grosemans, I., Dochy, F., & Kyndt E. (2017). Teacher autonomy and

    collaboration: a paradox? Conceptualising and measuring teachers' autonomy and

    collaborative attitude. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 67*(1), 302-315.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.06.021

Varenne, H. (1998). *Successful failure: The school America builds*. Routledge.

Walkerdine, V. (1987). Femininity as performance. In L. Stone (Ed.), *The education*

    feminism reader (pp. 57-69). Routledge.

Wall, H., & Palmer, M. (2015). Courage to love: Coaching dialogically toward teacher

    empowerment. *The Reading Teacher, 68*(8), 627-635.

    https://doi.org/10.1003/trtr.1353

Wang, Q., & Zhang, H. (2014). Promoting teacher autonomy through university–school

    collaborative action research. *Language Teaching Research, 18*(2), 222-241.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168813505942

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2012). *Applications of case study research* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2015). Case studies. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral*

    Sciences 3(2). https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.10507-0

Zeichner, K. (2018, October). *The importance of teacher agency and expertise in education reform and policymaking.* Keynote address presented at the Seoul International Education Forum sponsored by the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education.

APPENDIX A

CAMP IGNITE TEACHER SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW 1 PROTCOL

Hi there. Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today. My name is Ashley Nylin, and I am a doctoral student in the middle grades program at the University of Georgia. I am conducting a research project to investigate teacher perceptions of empowerment across contexts. Specifically, I am interested to learn if and how context impacts teacher perceptions of empowerment. Because of your unique role as a teacher teaching in a summer learning context as well as your local school classroom, I am interested in your perspectives regarding both experiences. This study reflects my interests as an educator, and the primary purpose of this interview is to inform my dissertation. Additionally, this interview will support a larger evaluation of Camp Ignite.

Before we begin the interview, I want to remind you that everything you share with me during this interview will be kept confidential, as explained in the consent form. Your name and any other identifying information will be removed to protect your privacy. If you do not wish to answer any of my questions, that is fine, and we will move on. You are welcome to skip questions if you wish, and can stop the interview at any time. I anticipate our time together will last between 45 minutes and one hour. While I have certain questions I will ask you, please feel free to ask your own questions of me at any time during this process. I want to understand your experiences from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the

meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to

explain things as you explain them. Will you help me understand? Before we begin, do

you have any questions?

There are no right or wrong answers to my questions. My purpose is to

understand your experience from your point of view.

Introductory questions:

- Will you tell me a little bit about your teaching career so far?
    - o Follow up: What did you teach? For how long? What was the context of the school?
    - o If they mention advanced degrees – what did you study? Where? When? Have you completed your terminal degree?
- In general, how do you feel about being an educator?
    - o Is it a path you would still choose? Why or why not?
    - o Would you recommend this profession to others? Why or why not?

General questions regarding Camp involvement and teaching:

- How did you end up at Camp Ignite?
    - o Why did you select Camp Ignite over other possible summer opportunities that may have been before you?
- What is your role at Camp Ignite?
    - o How would you compare your role this summer to your traditional role during the school year?
- Describe your philosophy of teaching
    - o What events have helped to shape your philosophy? Could you tell me about them?
- How would you describe Camp Ignite to an outsider?

Empowerment:

- Walk me through a typical day in your classroom during the school year
    - o How do you feel from day to day during the school year about your work as an educator?
- How would you describe how you teach during the school year?
    - o What are some examples of strategies or activities you like to incorporate? What about those encourages you to use them?
- Now, walk me through a typical day at Camp Ignite.
- How would you describe how you teach at Camp Ignite?

- o What similarities and differences exist between the school year and Camp?
- What are some challenges you face when teaching during the school year?
  - o How do you feel about those challenges? How would you like to change them?
- What are some challenges you face when teaching during Camp Ignite?
  - o How do you feel about those challenges? What might help resolve those challenges?
  - o What similarities and differences exist between the challenges of the school year and the summer?
- What excites you most about teaching during Camp Ignite/school year?
  - o Are there differences? What do you think is the reasoning for those differences?
- Do you notice instructional differences between your experience during the school year compared to Camp Ignite?
  - o Will you tell me more about that? Could you provide me with examples?
- Tell me about a time you wanted to make a change at your school
  - o What did you do? How did you feel?
- How were your efforts to enact change taken up by your colleagues and leaders in your school? How did that impact you?
- Tell me about a time you wanted to make a change at Camp Ignite
  - o What did you do? How did you feel?
- How were your efforts to enact change taken up by your colleagues and leaders at Camp Ignite? How did that impact you?
- How do you define empowerment?
  - o How does Camp Ignite do to support/negate that?
  - o What does your school do to support/negate that?
- What experiences have you had at Camp Ignite that you would like to take with you when you return to the classroom in August? Why?
  - o What is different
- What is your greatest takeaway from working with Camp Ignite this summer?

Closing:

- Based on our conversation, do you have any additional information you would like to add regarding your experience at Camp Ignite as it relates to your school-year teaching?

APPENDIX B

CAMP IGNITE TEACHER PARTICIPANT JOURNAL PROMPT

The purpose of this journal is to help prepare you for our second interview, which I hope

to schedule in mid-late November or December. Please use this as a place to record times

you feel particularly empowered or disempowered at school. Please feel free to use as

much detail as you are comfortable with. This, like your interviews, is something I will

de-identify, but is more for your recall when we meet up again than anything else.

Thanks for your participation!

APPENDIX C

ACADEMIC YEAR TEACHER SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW 2 PROTCOL

- Welcome, ask how year is going
- Remind participant of informed consent from first interview, may stop at any time
- If participant completed journal:
  - So, I noticed in your journal, you mentioned_____. Can you tell me more about that?
  - Do you have other situations or experiences you can share?
- If participant did not complete journal:
  - Take a few moments to reflect on your year so far. What stands out to you as being empowering or disempowering?
- Share my definition of empowerment
- Do you feel empowered at school? Tell me more. Why/why not?
- Think back to Camp Ignite – did you feel empowered there? Why/why not?
- What specific factors at school make you feel empowered? Disempowered?
- Think back to Camp Ignite – what factors there made you feel empowered? Disempowered?
- Do you see connections in those factors? How do you feel those factors exist across the contexts?
- Do you have anything else you would like me to know?

APPENDIX D

CAMP IGNITE TEACHER RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Camp Ignite Teacher

Interview

Recruitment Email

Camp Ignite Evaluation

Dear Teacher at Camp Ignite,

I am writing to request your help with a research study teacher empowerment. I am interested in learning about the impact of context on teacher perceptions of empowerment. As part of the data collection for this study, I am writing to ask if you would be willing to participate in two interviews regarding your experience at Camp Ignite and in your local school classroom. I, Ashley Nylin, a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Theory and Practice, will use these interviews for the purpose of my dissertation. The first of those interviews will take place in the second half of Camp, or shortly after the conclusion of Camp (during July). The follow-up interview will take place during the first semester of the school year, sometime between September and December. If you are interested in learning more about the study, please contact me via email (Ashley Nylin: xxxxxx@xxx.xxx), or express your interest in person at Camp Ignite. Thank you for your time.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

We are evaluating the extent to which Camp Ignite met the goals of preventing summer slide for P-12 students while providing opportunities for experiential learning for UGA students and opportunities for faculty to try out and investigate innovative pedagogical strategies. Within this study, I am investigating how teaching experiences at Camp Ignite and in local school classrooms impact Georgia teacher self-perceptions of empowerment.

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS:

Ashley S. Nylin, PhD candidate

Middle School Education Program

Department of Educational Theory and Practice

University of Georgia

Katherine F. Thompson, PhD

Middle School Education Program

Department of Educational Theory and Practice

University of Georgia

CAMP IGNITE TEACHER INFORMED CONSENT

Camp Ignite Teacher

Interview

Informed Consent

Camp Ignite Evaluation

Dear _____,

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted as part of an evaluation of Camp Ignite investigating teacher empowerment. For this project, I will be conducting interviews regarding your experiences as they relate to your work in a summer learning program and in your local school classroom. The interview activity will be conducted by doctoral student, Ashley Nylin, and will be supervised by co-principal investigator, Dr. Katherine F. Thompson.

The purpose of this interview is to gather information about your experiences regarding Camp Ignite and its impact, including your perceptions of empowerment across two contexts. **The information generated will be used for academic research or publication, including a doctoral dissertation, as well as for programmatic**

improvement. All information will be confidential, and pseudonyms will be used in the transcription of the interviews.

For this project, you will participate in two 60-minute semi-structured interviews, and may be asked to participate in additional, optional, follow-up interviews.

For this project, I will ask you a number of questions concerning your experience teaching at Camp Ignite and in your local school classroom. I will delete or destroy the audio-file or audio-tape at the completion of the project.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to refuse to participate or withdraw your participation at any time should you become uncomfortable with it. There are no risks or discomforts anticipated. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at anylin@uga.edu. I hope you will enjoy this opportunity to share your experiences and perspectives. Thank you so much.

Sincerely,

Ashley S. Nylin, Doctoral Candidate, Middle School Education Program, Department of Educational Theory and Practice

Dr. Katherine F. Thompson, Clinical Professor, Middle School Education Program, Department of Educational Theory and Practice

_____   _____

Signature of Researcher(s)   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

Please sign both copies, keep one copy and return one to the researcher(s).

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Chairperson,

Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411;

Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

APPENDIX F

Literature on Agency

Author(s)	Study type and Methods	Participants	Main Points/Conclusions
Allen, 2018	A report	All school districts in Iowa	Teacher identity is inextricably linked to agency, and agency is essential for participating in a school culture in which teachers are rewarded for initiative in pursuing professional development and for collegial collaborations
Bandura, 2006	A paper	N/A	Four core properties of agency: intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, self-reflectiveness People are contributors to their life circumstances, not just products of them.
Biesta et al., 2015	Qualitative Ethnography using interviews	6 classroom teachers	Teacher agency is highly dependent on the personal qualities that teachers bring with them - including professional knowledge and skills, as well as beliefs and values
Biesta et al., 2017	Qualitative Small scale ethnography using observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups	8 educators in various roles	Agency viewed as "exerting control over and giving direction to their everyday practices, bearing in mind that such practices are not just the outcome of teachers' judgements and actions, but are also shaped by the structured cultures within which teachers work" (p. 39) The way teachers talk in and about education is an important resource with regard to their achievement of agency

Calvert, 2016	A report	N/A	"In the context of professional learning, teacher agency is *the capacity of teachers to act purposefully and constructively to direct their professional growth and contribute to the growth of their colleagues*" "Agency is not another program to be implemented, but a deep and meaningful shift in the responsibilities and roles that teachers play in their learning and in the relationships that teachers have with each other and administrators. Agency is not panacea, but one of the many important elements in creating professional learning that works" (p. 20)
Emirbayer & Mische, 1998	A paper	N/A	"The temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments--the temporal-relational contexts of action--which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations" (p. 970) Has three dimensions: iterational, projective, and practical evaluative
Frost, 2006	A paper	N/A	Agency is not something one ever possesses, but instead, is a capacity which one works to achieve constantly
Fu & Clarke, 2017	A paper	N/A	Literal interpretation: for teachers to be agents of change in their schools

220

			Relates agency to how teacher education programs are designed to create agents of change. Within these programs, TEs focus on TCs inner capacities and subsequent engagements with the world.
			Discusses how agency is conceptualized in philosophy (Bandura's human agency)
			Agency has two components: capability and knowledgeability
Hökkä et al., 2017	Described as mixed-methods, but reads as a qualitative study Used a series of interviews, video	11 educators - lecturers or university teachers	Focuses on teachers' collective agency - relating identity to agency (like Tao and Gao). Refers to agency as defined by others and then states, "in this paper, collective agency is defined as enacted when *professional communities exert influence, make choices, and take stances in ways that affect their work and their professional identities*" (p. 38) After participating in the coaching program, educators expressed feelings of empowerment - they renegotiated their professional identities and came together as a group rather than individuals without a common goal
King & Nomikou, 2018	Qualitative - interviews, lesson observations, feedback discussions	9 teachers	"Agency comprises four theoretically derived components of purpose, mastery, reflexivity, and autonomy" (p. 92)

			Used the work of Pantic (2015) and van der Heijden et al (2015) to define agency.
			Pantic notes agency includes intentionality or a sense of purpose, competency to achieve such a purpose, and a degree of autonomy to act.
			Additionally, all three features give the individual the ability to reflect on their actions and envisage opportunities to change. - They argue (like Pantic) that there is scope for teachers to make autonomous choices about the ways they teach and manage their classes. van der Heijden describes characteristics of teachers who act agentically - they regularly and systematically reflect on their practice throughout the course of their careers, have a strong foundation in both subject matter and pedagogical practices, must make 'creative initiatives' and dare to take risks and challenge the status quo, and recognize the importance of collaboration not only for providing peer support, but, more significantly, for enabling change across the whole school
Lasky, 2005	Mixed-methods - survey and interviews	59 surveys, four interviews	"[agency] starts with the belief that human beings have the ability to influence their lives and environment while they are also shaped by social and individual factors" (p. 900)
Pantic, 2017	Mixed-methods - a survey, interviews, observations -	14 teachers	Autonomy is necessary for agency to be exercised - the power is in the ability to reflect. specifically addresses the use of agency for

			social change. this specific study focuses on agents' sense of purpose expressed in teachers' beliefs and competence.
			Teachers prioritize student wellbeing over everything else - see building relationships with students as the most powerful way to exercise agency
case study approach			Relationship-building is the biggest take away in terms of building an environment supportive of agency
Philpott & Oates, 2017	Qualitative

Focus groups as post- learning round observation conversations | Four focus groups of teachers, each at a different school | Connect teacher agency to professional learning and reform, refer heavily to Emirbayer and Mische (1998) that there are three elements of agency: the iterational, the projective, and the practical-evaluative.

Theorize agency as "an interaction between personal capacity and disposition and the affordances or resources for agency of the particular socio-cultural context. Agency is personal or collective. |
| Tao & Gao, 2017 | Qualitative

Ethnography using interviews, observations, field notes and document analysis | 8 initially, 3 focal teachers | Discusses agency within the context of professional development, but more detailed than Calvert (2016).

PD as something done for rather than to teachers, and teachers should exercise their rights to direct and responsibility to sustain their professional growth - and use their agency to respond to changes in the profession. It is multifaceted |

			and may manifest differently, per individual. They link agency to teacher identity and consider it a "crucial component" of intentional individuals
van der Heijden et al., 2015	Qualitative - interviews	4 external experts, 4 principals, 12 teachers that work for those principals	Change agents are characterized as: lifelong learners, a skilled teacher (pedagogy and content), an entrepreneur who takes risks, collaborates with others Essentially, being professional *is* being a change agent based on the four characteristics

APPENDIX G

Literature on Autonomy

Author(s)	Study type and Methods	Participants	Main Points/Conclusions
AASCU, 2017	Report	N/A	The P-12 teaching profession is being asked to do more with less, confronting growing expectations coupled with declining autonomy for teachers, low pay, constrained budgets and acute teacher shortages in certain regions and subject areas. Over 80 percent of the AASCU survey respondents felt that teachers today have too little autonomy
AACTE, 2018	Report	N/A	"These changes arguably have led to a decline in the number of students pursuing the profession of teaching as well as a decrease in the overall level of job satisfaction and sense of autonomy for many teachers" (p. 8)
Biesta et al., 2015	Qualitative Ethnography using interviews	6 classroom teachers	While this study focused on agency, the researchers described autonomy as: "the notion that teachers are to be agents of change within the new curriculum"
Honig & Rainey, 2012	Literature review	n/a	Autonomy = power in school decisions, uses autonomy interchangeably with discretion > similar to decentralization

			Autonomy = decision making authority, looks at *school* autonomy, autonomy is an elusive goal
Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2010	Article	N/A	Professional autonomy enhances rather than undermines teacher responsibility by situating educators as the primary authors of their own success or failure. Lack of autonomy is inclusive of micromanagement due to accountability initiatives
Ingersoll & May, 2011	Article	N/A	"schools that provide more teacher classroom discretion and autonomy, as well as schools with higher levels of faculty input into school decision making, had significantly lower levels of minority teacher turnover" (p. 64) "Implementation of school and teacher accountability initiatives has been accompanied by decreases in teachers' classroom autonomy and schoolwide decision-making input - the very working conditions associated with minority teacher turnover" (p. 65) "this [result] suggests the need for balance in reform - accountability and professionalism must go hand in hand. in other words, it does not make sense to hold somebody accountable for something they

			don't control or have input into, nor does it make sense to give someone autonomy and control over something for which they aren't held accountable" (p. 65)
Little, 1995	Article	N/A	Learner autonomy: learner accepts responsibility for their learning, which implies teacher accepts responsibility for their teaching
Pearson & Moomaw, 2006	Quantitative - survey	171 teachers	Autonomy has emerged as a critical factor for teachers to remain in the profession. Teacher flexibility in selecting activities and materials and instructional planning and sequencing is critical when elevating teaching to professional status, and autonomy is a determinant of novice teachers' use of such practices
Rosalba Cárdenas, 2006	Literature Review	N/A	Autonomy as responsibility, self-direction, collaboration, participation, cultural and political concerns. Takes into account human feelings, rationality, responsible actions and values - all combined for a certain attitude toward life.
Shalem et al., 2018	Qualitative – observations, post-observation semi-structured interviews which were videoed	15 teachers	For this study and the understanding of autonomy applied is "the idea that a person can choose her aims and means to achieve them, but should be able to justify those in relation to substantial knowledge and societal norms sanctioned by society" (p. 207) Teachers can make curricular and pedagogical decisions - but "they need to have recourse to experience which is meaningful

			and validated by knowledge and evidence" (p. 207) - so, teachers can make choices but need to be able to substantiate them.
Short, 1994	A paper		While Short's work focused on empowerment, it also defined autonomy as: also has autonomy definition: teachers' beliefs that they can control certain aspects of their work life (p. 490)
Strong & Yoshida, 2014	Quantitative - large scale survey called the TWA - the Teacher Work-Autonomy Scale	477 teachers in Michigan (this number reflects a 30% response rate)	Five factors for autonomy: curriculum development, professional development, student assessment, classroom management, school-wide operations
Torres, 2014	Qualitative - interviews	20 teachers	Related to decision making and ownership in schools A high degree of control over issues that are connected to their daily activities Teachers have autonomy in certain classroom-level decisions, but want more that will impact the entire school. Lack of autonomy, especially as it related to behavior management, may drive teacher turnover
Vangrieken et al., 2017	Quantitative – a series of surveys	1639, then 1133 in second wave. Teachers in Belgium	Two types of autonomy - reflective and reactive. A reactive attitude tends to hamper collaborative efforts, whereas a reflective attitude facilitates collaborative work (p. 312)
Wang & Zhang, 2014	Qualitative - open ended questionnaires, interviews,	45 teachers, broken into 12 groups, each working with	Autonomy can be developed through teacher research, and define autonomy as having a lack of constraints

	document analysis	1-2 university researchers.	
			"Teachers developed a better understanding of what they do in the classroom and moved a major step forward towards teacher autonomy by being engaged in research while participation of university researchers has served to speed up this process" (p. 235)

APPENDIX H

Literature on Self-Efficacy

Author(s)	Study type and Methods	Participants	Main Points/Conclusions
Bandura, 1997	A paper	N/A	"Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3)
Cantrell & Callaway, 2008	Qualitative - interviews	16 teachers	"teacher efficacy refers to a teachers' beliefs that she or he can positively influence a student's learning despite perceived barriers" (p. 1740) Teacher efficacy is a type of self-efficacy in that teachers are strongly affected by their beliefs about their potential to affect student learning, and those beliefs relate directly to their efforts and persistence with students (p. 1740)
Del Grecco et al., 2018	Mixed methods - case study & statistical analysis	80 preservice teachers	Bandura's social cognitive theory Exposure to inquiry-based science teaching methods increased preservice teacher self-efficacy

Gibson & Dembo, 1984	Quantitative, in a series of phases	208 teachers, then 55 teachers, then 8 for observations	"teachers' beliefs in their abilities to instruct students" (p. 569)
			Teacher efficacy may influence certain patterns of classroom behavior known to yield achievement gains (p. 579)
Glackin & Hohenstein, 2018	Mixed methods - survey, observations, interviews	6 case study teachers	Self-efficacy has been defined as a teacher's judgement of their ability to influence student outcomes
Glackin, 2016	Qualitative - interpretive multiple case study. Written reflections and questionnaires, field notes from observations, interviews, someone else's field notes	6 case study teachers	Self-efficacy = their belief in their future capability (p. 412)
Gonzalez et al., 2017	Mixed methods - survey of 145 teachers, and focus groups	145 teachers in the survey, three focus groups of 7-9 teachers	"a teacher's judgement regarding his or her abilities to affect student achievement is a powerful belief. Research showed that a teacher's self-efficacy has been related to several student outcomes including student achievement, motivation, and students' self-efficacy." (p. 518)
			"in addition, efficacy affects the amount of effort teachers exert in their craft, in the goals they set, and in their level of aspiration" (p. 518)
			"teachers' sense of self-efficacy may influence their classroom interactions along

			with negative factors, such as stress, burnout, and their ultimate intent to quit teaching" (p. 518)
Klassen & Durksen, 2014	Mixed methods - TSES (scale). 4 case study participants completed 6 or more open-ended weekly responses	Three cohorts of teacher candidates in their final year (150 students). through a methodical narrowing down 4 were selected for the qualitative component for case studies.	Used Bandura's 1997 self-efficacy definition

Most preservice teachers displayed increasingly stronger self-efficacy as they gained experience during their practicum. The analysis did not find the expected relationship between self-efficacy and stress: high self-efficacy can exist with high stress |
| Klassen et al., 2011 | Literature review | N/A | Self-efficacy is slowly moving toward diverse research methods (although it is heavily quantitative). The pace of research has increased. Need to research how efficacy beliefs are formed. Issues with measurement instruments.

Connection between student outcomes and teacher self-efficacy not as strong as one might think. |
| Ninkovic & Floric, 2018 | Quantitative - Surveys | 120 teachers | teacher self-efficacy is a result of an observation of one's own abilities

"When teachers believe that they are personally competent to teach, this |

			[belief] can lead to better academic achievements of students and, consequently, to more positive perceptions of the efficacy of the school staff - (p. 60)
Perera et al., 2018	Quantitative - four different measures/scales	574 teachers	"Teachers' beliefs about their ability to manage classrooms, engage students, and use effective instructional strategies" (p. 172)
Short, 1994	A paper	N/A	Self-efficacy: teachers' perceptions that they have the skills and ability to help students learn, are competent in building effective programs for students, and can effect changes in student learning (p. 490)
Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007	Quantitative - development and implementation of scales	246 teachers	Exercising human agency - the idea that humans can exercise influence over what they do (p. 611) Development of a teacher self-efficacy scale, self-efficacy is multidimensional: instruction, adapting education to individual students' needs, motivating students, keeping discipline, cooperating with colleagues and parents, coping with changes and challenges (p. 614). Revealed a strong correlation between self-efficacy and burnout
Somech & Drach-	Quantitative - scales and surveys	251 teachers	"a person's perceived expectation of succeeding at

Zahavy, 2000			a task" - "for teachers, efficacy is based on their perceived ability to affect students' learning" (p. 651)

APPENDIX I

Literature on Empowerment

Author(s)	Study type and Methods	Participants	Main Points/Conclusions
Avidov-Ungar & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2018	Quantitative	633 Israeli teachers	Reduced autonomy leads teachers to feel increasingly disempowered and professionally marginalized (p. 157) The greater the teachers' sense of empowerment, the greater their desire for future promotion and their beliefs in the fairness of the promotional process. Teachers currently holding leadership positions expressed the strongest sense of empowerment
Balyer et al., 2017	Qualitative, survey, interview	20 teachers in Istanbul	"Through teacher empowerment, teachers develop their own competence and self-discover their potential and limitations" (p. 2) "though teacher empowerment, schools expand the quality of educational results. For this reason, it is important to research school administrators' roles in the teacher empowerment process," (p. 4)
Bogler & Somech, 2004	Quantitative	983 teachers in 25 middle schools and 27 high schools	Teachers feel they are respected (status), have opportunities for professional growth, are effective at their job (impact), and perform well (self-efficacy).

			Uses the same definition as the Short et al. (1994)
Bogler & Nir, 2012	Quantitative	2565 teachers in Israeli elementary schools	Most influential dimension of empowerment is self-efficacy. "Empowerment is used by organizational leaders as a means to express the appreciation and support of their employees" (p. 289) Uses Short et al. (1994) Teachers who feel empowered are characterized by the 6 dimensions on the scale
Howe & Stubbs, 1997	Telephone survey and focus group (mixed methods)	Two surveys: 67 and 114. Focus group of 12 teachers	"one gains the power to take charge of one's growth and, to the extent that this [opportunity] is ever possible, to one's life" (p. 169)
Lightfoot, 1986	Qualitative: portraiture	six schools across the country	"Empowerment refers to the opportunities a person has for autonomy, responsibility, choice, and authority," (p. 9) "Empowerment cannot co-exist with the rigid requirements of a hierarchical authoritarianism" (p. 10)

			"...empowerment of each group enhances the opportunities for its recognition and expression in other groups" (p. 10) "Teachers became the central actors in the chain of empowerment. In fact, schools were viewed as good for students when they were educative and nurturant environments for teachers" (p. 22)
Seed, 2006	A paper		"Administrators who empower teachers grant them 'the autonomy to make decisions about curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment' (Wasley, 1991, p. 20). Empowered teachers become risk takers by trying new ideas, reading new books, and attending and planning professional development activities to survive and thrive in the current high-stakes school climate (McCarty, 1993). They also take on new roles such as team leader, action researcher, curriculum developer, and in-house trainer (Boles & Troen, 1992)." (p. 41)
Short & Rinehart, 1992	Series of quantitative studies	study 1: 79 teacher leaders, study 2: 211 teachers in public schools. study 3: 176 secondary teachers in 3 schools over 3 states	Determined 6 dimensions of empowerment that many use in their empowerment work. the dimensions are: decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy, and impact
Short et al., 1994	Qualitative - grounded theory	9 schools	Uses the 6 dimensions of empowerment (Short & Rinehart, 1992) The empowerment project lasted three years and resulted in 3

			categories of schools: opportunity schools, shifters, and no-go schools. The study underscored the power of school leadership (the principal), and that if change is not desired, it will not happen.
Short, 1994	A paper	M/A	"a process whereby school participants develop the competence to take charge of their own growth and resolve their own problems: (p. 488)
Stolk et al., 2016	Qualitative	2 research cycles eith 13 teachers total	Concluded that the main activities of the PD program contributed to the empowerment of teachers for teaching and designing context-based chemistry education, but also highlighted that the current framework was lacking and needs work going forward
Stromquist, 1995	A paper		"empowerment is a process which should center on adult women for two central reasons: first, their adult lives have produced many experiences of subordination and thus they know this problem very well, although they have not labeled it as such and second, the transformation of these women is fundamental to breaking the integrational reproduction of patriarchal authority" (p. 14) "empowerment is a socio-political concept that goes beyond 'formal political participation' and 'consciousness raising.' a full definition of empowerment must include cognitive, psychological, political, and economic components" (p. 14)
Trust, 2017	Qualitative: short answer surveys and in-depth interviews	150 surveys, 10 interviews.	Relates empowerment to confidence

			"As a result, these teachers were more willing to take risks and try out new ideas and practices with the encouragement of the MSC," (p. 22). "...feelings of empowerment led to more than just changes in their own teaching. Some of the participants were inspired to help others grow their practice," (p. 23).
Wall & Palmer, 2015	Article	N/A	Open-ended questions and an inquiry approach to professional learning had the potential to empower teachers