Intrinsic and Extrinsic Contextual Factors Influencing Advocacy in Literacy Leaders:
Perspectives of District Reading Supervisors

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at George Mason University

By

Tamie Lynn Pratt-Fartro
Master of Arts
Virginia Tech, 1999
Bachelor of Liberal Studies
Mary Washington College, 1997
Bachelor of Science
Michigan State University, 1989

Director: William G. Brozo, Ph.D., Professor
Graduate School of Education

Fall Semester 2009
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my parents, Douglas and Elizabeth Pratt, for instilling the value of perseverance, the ability to keep everything in perspective, and the importance of family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC CONTEXTUAL FACTORS INFLUENCING ADVOCACY IN LITERACY LEADERS: PERSPECTIVES OF DISTRICT READING SUPERVISORS

Tamie Lynn Pratt-Fartro, Ph.D.

George Mason University, 2009

Dissertation Director: William G. Brozo, Ph.D.

Public school literacy leaders have complex roles and responsibilities associated with their positions, including being literacy advocates. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the factors that contributed to district reading supervisors' perceptions of advocacy. Participants included five district reading supervisors in the state of Virginia. Using grounded theory design, a series of three rounds of interviews with each participant yielded data related to intrinsic and extrinsic contextual factors that influenced how district reading supervisors and school-based reading professionals worked to meet literacy needs in K-12 settings. Results indicated that past experiences informed both roles and dispositions. Supervisors and reading professionals used their roles to support others in meeting students' needs. Professional and personal dispositions influenced the

ways in which literacy leaders negotiated relationships with literacy stakeholders,

particularly principals. These extrinsic and intrinsic factors subsequently influenced the

ways in which district reading supervisors perceived and enacted advocacy. Discussion

includes a substantive theory of advocacy in literacy leaders, questions warranting further

study, and implications for teacher educators, school-based administrators and

educational policymakers.

1. Introduction

Personal Background for Inquiry

"It is by acts and not by ideas that people live." Anatole France

I chose to begin this dissertation with the quote by France because it fully

represents the unlikely path which led me to an interest in advocacy as explored in

this study. During an exceptionally tight fiscal year, the district in which I worked

was undergoing a significant budget crisis. There were obvious differences of opinion

between the two political bodies controlling and managing the schools' purse strings.

For the third year in a row, teachers faced another freeze on pay, yet increased costs

for health insurance. On the eve of a crucial budget meeting, members of the district's

education association organized an after-school demonstration at the county seat

publicly denouncing the lack of concern for the welfare of teachers and students as

evidenced through the under-funding of the schools. Unfortunately for me, the

demonstration coincided with an end-of-year poolside staff party at our principal's

home, but there was no real decision to make as to how I would spend the afternoon. I

was committed to standing up for what I believed was the right thing to do for the all

teachers. Therefore, as I marched in the hot sun and soaking rain with my home-made

cardboard sign, I noticed that I was one of two teachers from my school that had a

staff of over 90 people. Where was *everyone*? Didn't *they* care? Why weren't *they*

there? After mulling these questions over in my mind, I decided I was asking the

wrong questions. Instead of asking why others *weren't* there, I wanted to know why

people *were* there. What was it that made *us* take a stand, publicly participate and

want our voices heard? From where did those desires and beliefs come? Could they

apply to literacy in any way?

Thus, France's quote captures not only the way I approached the above events and

the design of this study, but also encapsulates what I hope the reader will conclude by

the end of the study: that acting is living. I do not wish each reader to believe as I do,

rather my intention is that what lies ahead is a logical, thoughtful and idea-provoking

trail for others to consider, modify, follow and expand upon in a quest for deeper

understanding of how literacy leaders carry out their work in service to others.

Introduction

Traditional views of advocacy are rooted in the study of law as exemplified by the

definition of an advocate as one who argues for a cause or pleads on another's behalf

(Lewis, Jongsma & Berger, 2005). The use of the term in this manner can generically

apply to anyone who supports, assists, aids, and defends people or causes. More

recently, advocacy specific to education evolved, and is typically associated with

actions applied to political environments where opinions are presented to local, state

and national lawmakers. The end result being policymakers' decisions on particular

education issues influenced by those engaged in advocacy efforts; however, the term

advocate is increasingly applied to education professionals without an outward political orientation.

Whitaker (2007) defines an education advocate as someone with knowledge of education who uses that knowledge to influence people, policies or both. Characteristics of education advocates include being proactive, staying current with education policies, focusing on students' learning, speaking up to promote the good of the whole, motivating others and taking risks (Whitaker, 2007). Those who demonstrate this non-traditional view of advocacy do not necessarily impact the political landscape *outside* of classrooms, although they may. More often this form of advocacy involves school leaders affecting change *within i*ndividual schools and districts.

Commitment to and demonstration of advocacy is often an expected professional disposition for education leaders such as superintendents, administrators and instructional supervisors. However, there is little common understanding as to how education leaders perceive advocacy, how it's enacted in the workplace, or what factors influence leaders' perceptions surrounding advocacy. The focus of this study is to explore contextual factors including malleable professional and personal dispositions that contribute to their district reading supervisors' perceptions of advocacy.

<center>Background of Problem</center>

Within the past decade, it has become increasingly important for American public schools to develop comprehensive literacy programs at both the elementary and

<center>3</center>

secondary levels. Much of this push is in direct response to federal legislation such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and numerous state reading initiatives (Commission on NCLB, 2007; Song & Young, 2008). Pubic schools are held accountable for the literacy growth of all students. One indicator of this is the provision in NCLB for all schools to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is a measurement defined under NCLB which allows the United States Department of Education to gauge the progress of students, both overall and in various subgroups identified through socio-economic, demographic and special education services data. Each year, schools must meet increasingly higher minimum levels of state-defined proficiencies on reading assessments as benchmarks to achieving the national goal of 100% of students reaching these minimum levels by 2014 (Commission on NCLB, 2007).

NCLB legislation has forced states to institute mandatory reading assessments at both elementary and secondary levels (Song & Young, 2008). In the Commonwealth of Virginia where my study was conducted, for example, students in grades 3-8, as well as 11, take standardized tests in English which mainly consist of a series of short fiction and non-fiction passages, followed by multiple-choice reading comprehension questions. The tests are based on minimum competency expectations for all Virginia students called Standards of Learning or SOL (Virginia DOE, 2008). Individual schools are expected to direct all of their instructional time and professional development toward increasing the pass rates of all students in an effort to make AYP. Meeting these SOL benchmarks ensures continued state and federal funding, and minimal intrusion into schools by state accountability teams.

Additionally, there are economic implications for ensuring that all students meet minimum reading standards. Illiteracy in America affects the entire economy at a rate of approximately $244 billion annually (National Governors Association, 2006). When students leave high school with less than basic reading and writing skills, it is estimated that businesses and universities spend approximately $16 billion per year compensating for lost productivity and funding remediation efforts (National Governors Association, 2005). On the opposite end of the spectrum, quality schools can mean prosperity for localities that meet AYP requirements as local school districts rely on federal funding to supplement their own state and local funding (National School Boards Association, 2008). As a result, state policymakers feel more urgency for school districts to demonstrate progress in reading, making it incumbent upon school districts to create highly effective literacy programs that meet the needs of all students.

In addition to state and federal accountability, another impetus behind the effective literacy program push is the need for American students to compete on a global level. International data from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) indicates that the literacy skills of fourth grade students in the United States are significantly below numerous other countries including the Russian Federation, Hong Kong SAR and Singapore (PIRLS, 2007). As smaller countries such as Luxembourg, Italy and Hungary outperform the United States on measures of reading, policy makers and stakeholders come to question the literacy efforts in public schools.

Because of the emphasis on accountability and growth at local, state, national and international levels, the need for effective literacy programs for all students regardless of ability cannot be overstated. Essential components of such programs include sustained development of quality reading curricula and instructional practices, as well as appropriate use of assessments (Bean, 2008). Undoubtedly, developing and sustaining such an effective school-wide literacy program takes effort from a wide range of school personnel with literacy expertise who can advocate for programs and individual students.

The need for effective literacy programs is contributing to an expanded interest in the roles and responsibilities of *literacy professionals* working in K-12 settings. The International Reading Association identifies five separate categories of literacy professionals who provide reading instruction: paraprofessional, classroom teacher, reading specialist, teacher educator and administrator (IRA, 2007). Within the reading specialist category falls the position of reading supervisor or reading coordinator. In addition to leading school literacy programs and professional development, reading supervisors must also be prepared to "provide leadership in student advocacy" (IRA, 2007, p.1).

This advocacy can take many different forms depending on the needs of a particular school including providing instructional support to teachers, purchasing resource materials, serving on school or district planning committees, promoting district literacy initiatives, providing professional development to teachers, and acting as a liaison for the school with parents, community members and businesses (IRA,

2007). Although often not in direct contact with students in schools, reading supervisors have the potential to influence the literacy culture within a particular school or district in significant ways (Rickert, 1990).

Embedded within this role is the fundamental need for reading supervisors to demonstrate and communicate appropriate leadership qualities to those responsible for literacy programs within schools, specifically reading specialists and literacy coaches (Sturtevant, 2003). Although supervisors and specialists/coaches have differing roles and responsibilities, I assert that the interconnectedness of their advocacy efforts results in environments which ensure the literacy growth of all students. This assertion is based on my personal experience as a reading specialist, and forms the basis for my inquiry into advocacy in literacy leaders.

Statement of the Problem

In general education settings, the term 'student advocate' is increasingly used to describe roles, responsibilities and characteristics of school leaders including superintendents, principals, and media specialists (Eisenberg, 2003; Stader, 2003). The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a non-profit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education throughout the United States. The organization's primary responsibilities are to provide "leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues…and expressing their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 4). The CCSSO created the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), a committee of educational

representatives from states and professional organizations charged with the task of developing a set of core standards for education leaders. These core standards are characterized by three dimensions: knowledge, dispositions and performances. The disposition for Standard One states that an "administrator believes in, values and is committed to inclusion of all members of the school community" (Rebore, 2003, p.xi). While the term advocacy isn't explicitly used, one can certainly draw a connection between advocating for all and including all in the school community. If one is advocating for students, then one possesses the belief that students have the right to be included.

The second ISLLC standard calls for educational leaders to "promote the success of all students by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning" (Rebore, 2003, p. xii). With both implicit and explicit references to advocacy, the significance of the term in relation to the development of school leaders is clearly evident.

Additionally, the term advocacy is being attached to the characteristics and qualifications inherent to those in positions of literacy leadership. This includes literacy coaches, reading specialists and district reading supervisors (IRA, 2007). As this study shows, there is minimal scholarly research on reading supervisors' roles and responsibilities in general, and no specific research on perceptions of advocacy, dispositions connected to advocacy or how reading supervisors contextualize advocacy. Therefore, exploring these issues with literacy leaders will provide a much-

needed articulation of how advocacy efforts can transform both instructional growth in teachers, and literacy growth in students.

Significance of the Problem

Understanding the influence that literacy leaders have within the public school system is an important part of providing equitable education to all students. District reading supervisors serve in capacities that are often highly visible to a variety of education stakeholders. Supervisors generally report to superintendents and school boards, and they are often tasked with leading district-wide literacy efforts, further positioning them in the public eye. At the school level, reading supervisors are responsible for guiding the practice of reading specialists and literacy coaches (Sturtevant, 2003). As instructional literacy leaders who have lived experiences of visible advocacy, reading supervisors can inform how advocacy is demonstrated in public school settings (Archer, 2008). Obtaining rich descriptions of their advocacy experiences, meanings and actions will further contextualize the phenomenon of advocacy, add to the nuances of educational interpretation, and contribute to a better overall understanding of literacy leadership.

Furthermore, district office personnel have the decision-making power to determine how curriculum is developed, grants are administered, and policy interpreted, yet very little research exists as to how these stakeholders use their influence for change within schools (Grogan, 2005; Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005). Obviously, educational change occurs because of influence from a multitude of stakeholders and participants. Understanding how district literacy leaders contribute

9

to educational change via their perceptions of advocacy will add insight into potential policy shifts needed to improve literacy leadership preparation programs particularly for reading professionals.

<div align="center">Problem</div>

District reading supervisors have the responsibility of being student advocates, as well as leading others in advocacy efforts for students at a school-wide level (IRA, 2007).

> It is clear that teachers are advocates for their students but that's rarely talked about. Teachers stand alone when they advocate. For most teachers there are no courses available on teaching and advocacy. We rarely talk about the role that literacy plays in providing opportunities for teachers to work as advocates (Taylor, Coughlin, & Marasco, 1997).

Currently, there is an expectation that literacy leaders engage in advocacy, but this expectation is muddied by an incomplete understanding of the complexities associated with being an advocate including one's actions and dispositions.

Although there is research on dispositions necessary for education leaders such as superintendents and school administrators, there is limited research on dispositions needed for those in literacy leadership positions. In a validation study of an instrument measuring administrators' dispositions, Schulte and Kowal (2005) state that while preparation in curricula is important for education leaders, the development of their dispositions has more of an impact on their overall success. This raises questions concerning the pre-service and in-service training of reading professionals.

If we know that dispositions impact success, and that professional standards call literacy leaders to act as advocates (CCSSO, 2008; IRA, 2007), shouldn't we have further understanding of how reading professionals' dispositions impact perceptions of advocacy? Therefore, the current study intends to add to the body of knowledge surrounding personal and professional influences of advocacy in literacy leaders.

Research Questions

The purpose of the following study was to explore the factors which contribute to district reading supervisors' perceptions of advocacy. The research study described below was designed to answer the following questions regarding advocacy in literacy leaders.

1. What professional roles and personal experiences influence district reading supervisors' perceptions of advocacy?

2. What professional and personal dispositions influence district reading supervisors' perceptions of advocacy?

3. What does advocacy look like in the work of literacy leaders?

By clarifying advocacy in experienced literacy leaders, we may be able to translate what is learned into workable guidelines and provide models of successful literacy advocacy for pre-service and in-service teachers. This in turn may lead to more effective and responsive literacy instruction in public schools.

Clarification of Terms

For the purpose of clarification, below are the specific definitions of terms used throughout this study: 1) *district or division reading supervisor*: one who oversees K-

12 literacy programs from the central office level in public schools; 2) *reading professional*: a school-based literacy leader responsible for some portion of a school-wide literacy program and professional development at the K-12 level; specific in-school titles include reading specialist, literacy coach, and reading teacher*; 3) servant leader:* a leader whose role calls for work in service to others. Servant leaders do not necessarily hold subordinate positions to those they seek to serve. 4) *dispositions:* values, commitments, ethics, or beliefs that are internally held and may or may not be externally exhibited (Cudahy, Finnan, Jaruzewicz & McCarty, 2002), as well as attitudes, and character and personality traits. Dispositions are internal tendencies that move a person to feel a certain way, which then leads to action. Some individuals are adept at verbalizing their dispositions and can readily discuss the connection between dispositions and actions; others do not fully understand the influence that these internal constituents have on external acts. Throughout this study, I assert that dispositions are flexible, malleable and change depending on experiences and context. 5) *context:* the interconnectedness of individuals and circumstances contributing to an event or action. Included in context is an individual's dispositions as dispositions cannot be separated from an individual. Throughout this research, I hold that context is situated, meaning particular to and inclusive of multiple factors that one brings to a situation. 6) *advocacy*: making a judgment *for* something or someone by taking a position and defending it with sound argumentation (Spacks, 1997). I believe that advocacy is an outcome-based demonstration or experience. The advocate has a

specific idea of what he/she desires for another individual or group which results in a

particular action. This action may or may not be visible to others.

2. Literature Review

Inclusions and Exclusions of Search

I searched numerous education databases to gather literature relevant to this study. The databases searched were ERIC, Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, PsycINFO, ProQuest, EBSCO Host, Digital Dissertations and Dissertation International Abstracts. The following search terms and their derivations were used in various combinations to yield the most search hits: education, advocate, disposition, social justice, literacy, critical literacy, leadership, reading, supervisor, coordinator, central office, and language arts. Additionally, the following scholarly journals were searched: *The Reading Teacher, Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, Reading Research Quarterly, Language Arts and Language Teaching Research.* Finally, I used WRLC Libraries Catalog and online commercial websites to find literature resources pertinent to the study as well. Literature that focused on advocacy as it relates to educational leaders was included. Literature which explored advocacy as *political* action in forums *outside the context of public schools* was beyond the scope of this study and thereby excluded.

Literature Review Design

The literature reviewed for this study was organized in the following manner in order to narrow-in on advocacy in district reading supervisors. First, I chose literature

14

which situates advocacy within the historical context of democracy as the foundation of public education. Second, studies highlighting the necessity for educational leaders to be grounded in the cultural understandings of democracy and advocacy are presented. Third, literature related to advocacy specific to literacy leaders in public schools is discussed. Finally, research focusing on in-school, and district reading supervisors and coordinators is presented.

Advocacy Grounded in Democracy

The concept of advocacy is quite prevalent in American schools, the foundation of which stems from historical beliefs surrounding the purpose of public education. Dewey (1915) stated that as a society, we should consider the end to a proper education as "the promotion of the best possible realization of humanity as humanity" (p. 78). This outcome is accomplished through education that enables citizens to realize their best moral, rational and free selves. Dewey (1915) went on to suggest that a true democratic society does not merely rely on its governing system for equality, but more on its educational system. Schools take on this role because education is a form of social community and communication where one has to "refer his own action to that of others, and consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own" (p. 71). As this democracy is realized through education, racial, social, and economic barriers are broken down leaving way for equity in all contexts of a functioning society.

In his early writings on democracy in education, Paolo Freire (1970) expressed the need for teachers and students to collaborate in the development of a more democratic

society. This would only be accomplished when both would stand together to challenge the social circumstances that prevented students from fully participating in classrooms. Freire insisted that a commitment to others through listening to the concrete experiences of students was one of the virtues of a democratic educator (Cherland & Harper, 2007).

In a 2004 article explaining how democracy is demonstrated in schools, Edelsky defined, compared and contrasted two categories of democracy: political and living. Political democracy is equality of participation in the law, and alternation of power. Lived democracy is more applicable to education and is defined as political democracy *plus*. The plus includes all persons having a voice in decisions which affect them, as well as having equal opportunity to resources which allow their voices to be heard in a society free from barriers based on class, race and economic status (Edelsky, 2004).

These understandings of democracy are evident in the preparation of education leaders today. Bredeson (2004) described the three-year restructuring of an educational leadership program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison which focused on providing pre-service principals with opportunities to "develop and experience democratic values in their on-going professional development and in their daily work" (p. 710). Through strategic planning, faculty retreats and reflection on current curricular practices, 15 faculty members revised their program to ensure that principals understood their work in schools was to advance 'educational quality and opportunity for all learners (p. 719). In the article, Bredeson described two roles,

creator and dismantler, that democratic school leaders need to assume if the schools in which they work are to embody true democratic principles. As creators, principals create "just, fair, humane and caring conditions, processes, and structures that provide equitable opportunity, access and experiences for everyone" (p. 712). Creators can be considered advocates for equity within their schools. However, principals also play the role of dismantler by "challenging the inequities in the school and disrupting the sources and systems that contribute to those injustices" (p. 712).

Bredeson's comments regarding the program and the university's realignment of professional development requirements for pre-service leaders suggested that the dispositions, or internal beliefs, which are valued in democratic leaders such as principals, do not just occur randomly. These dispositions need to be identified, validated and nurtured explicitly. Structures for learning them need to be established and evaluated in the context of higher education if application in actual school settings is to occur (Bredeson, 2004).

In a 2005 commentary on closing achievement gaps through the careful preparation of education leaders, Johnson & Uline suggested that specific dispositions are necessary in district leaders, including the belief that every student can learn, and the willingness to nurture this belief in others. Successful district leaders engender necessary dispositions, as well as create practices and polices which support those dispositions in other school personnel (Johnson & Uline, 2005). It is this supportive collaboration that moves individual teachers from narrow-focused content teaching, to a broader view of teaching within the democratic purpose of public schooling.

17

Susan Ohanian, educator, author and advocate stated in a 2008 interview, "It is often a challenge for an educator to realize that part of their professional responsibility is to…address social justice issues that are grounded in the ideals of our democracy" (Hunt & Hutchinson, p. 5). Ohanian suggests that if teachers spend too much of their time focusing on content, they will never get to what counts: every child's right to a quality education that empowers them to be productive citizens of democracy (Hunt & Hutchinson, 2008). Viewing schooling and teaching through this critical lens means that school leaders have the moral responsibility to create school cultures and structures which facilitate equity for all students.

<center>Advocacy Grounded in Inclusive Leadership</center>

Advocacy is a complex and abstract concept which needs to be contextualized in order to comprehend the full capacity of its meaning. Even then, the way one defines advocacy will vary from person to person based on his or her particular circumstance. However, from an educational perspective, McAloon (1994) defined advocacy as "defending or promoting a child or an educational program" (p.318). With this definition, she went on to state that defending means "to supply needed support" while promoting means the "active advancement of the child or the program" (p. 318).

McAloon (1994) categorized advocacy even further by suggesting two types: "advocacy from within" and "advocacy from without." The latter described advocates *of* education, essentially third-parties who are not necessarily educators yet who assist teachers, schools and parents, and communities by claiming to represent their best

<center>18</center>

interests on a broad range of education related topics. This type of advocacy is distinct from 'advocacy from within' in that professional educators from *within* each school or district, rather than outside the district, work on issues important to students and teachers.

McAloon identified three types of within advocacy; the one most relevant to the current study was *teacher to teacher*. As a reading specialist, McAloon found that building rapport and trust with teachers was essential to effectively advocating for a particular student, teacher or program. It was not clear, however, whether such traits were essential relational precursors to advocating, or were they established through the process itself.

McAloon's definitions and descriptions are crucial to understanding the basic premise underlying advocacy: inclusion. Inclusion refers to the responsibility of school leaders to ensure that all students are full participants within the culture of school in order to have all learning needs met (IDEA, 2004). Inclusion and advocacy are prevalent in the field of special education. It is a professional expectation as well as a legal requirement that special educators act as advocates for their students as they strive to include students with disabilities in least restrictive environments (IDEA, 2004). To fully include students with disabilities in all facets of a school, administrators and instructional school leaders need to be visible advocates for all students.

Inclusion is also a premise of servant leadership first identified by Greenleaf (1977) as leader who possesses "the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve

first" (p. 27) and then lead others. When developing this framework of leadership, Greenleaf drew upon Biblical theory referencing Jesus Christ as the ultimate servant leader. Although 'servant leader' is seemingly a contradictory use of terms, Greenleaf (1977) stressed that servant leaders are not beneath others in a typical pyramid-shaped organizational hierarchy. They are, rather, designated leaders who are smaller in number in an organization, but who support and serve the greater numbers doing the work in and of the organization. Their purpose is to "make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served" (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 27).

Sipe and Frick (2009) expanded on Greenleaf's conception of servant leadership using their years of experience in the fields of psychology, business and education. They identified seven pillars or characteristics of servant leaders who work to support an organization and its stakeholders: 1) "person of character; 2) puts people first; 3) skilled communicator; 4) compassionate collaborator; 5) has foresight; 6) systems thinker; 7) leads with moral authority" (p.5-6). Within each characteristic above is a set of exemplifying competencies. Although advocacy is not specifically identified, several relate to themes underlying advocacy and potentially to district supervisors roles. These include mentoring, building teams, negotiating conflict, creating a culture of accountability and considering the greater good (Sipe & Frick, 2009).

Although servant leadership has roots in Biblical theory and ties to organizational leadership (Sipe & Frick, 2009; Greenleaf, 1977) it has been increasingly applied to education leaders. For example, in a 2005 review of literature on female black superintendents, Alton used the conceptual framework of servant leadership to

analyze their roles within public schools. She found that female superintendents tend to "dedicate themselves to the care of children, use collaboration…and are deeply caring about their mission to serve, lead and educate children" (p. 682). Again, while the article did not specifically reference advocacy, female superintendents' dedication and commitment to serving children is applicable to advocacy in that these women were willing to serve to persevere in public education despite obstacles such as marginalization and discrimination because they believed "they were making a difference for students" (p. 682).

Similarly, Hall (2009) conducted a single-case study of a female principal in a high-achieving, low socio-economic elementary school in Texas. Interview data and field notes from observations revealed that the principal self-identified as a servant leader. Additional results suggested that creating a student-centered school culture was central to the principal's role as school leader (2009). Alton's (2005) and Hall's (2009) studies are relevant to advocacy in that they address leadership through an inclusive lens: keeping students at the core of a leader's work.

Additional studies on servant leaders point out the need for modeling in order to toward inclusiveness in schools. Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson, and Jinks (2007) conducted a quantitative study of 112 school principals and found that those who identified themselves as servant leaders modeled leadership to teachers in order to "enhance the collaboration needed to meet students needs" (p .412). While there is no mention of advocacy in their study, based on their results they suggest that servant

leadership should be the focus of training for other educational leaders in order to embrace a commitment to all students (Taylor et al., 2007).

Additionally, Alcala conducted a phenomenological study of five secondary school principals in Texas who identified themselves as servant leaders (2009). She found that principals first and foremost identified themselves as service providers working to meet others' needs. This should not be construed as the principals meeting the needs of demanding superiors or embracing a subordinate role to others. Instead, principals viewed this service capacity as an integral and necessary part of their positions. As one participant in the study stated, "I do it and don't really think about it" (p. 96). Alcala's results also suggested the need for district office personnel to model to principals how to work best to serve the students collectively and appropriately (2009). However, the following research by Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis (2008) indicated that it is difficult to hold a disposition toward inclusiveness unless one has been trained to do so.

In a 2008 study, Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis engaged in a qualitative study of higher education faculty who prepare school administrators "to hold the critical dispositions necessary to be inclusive leaders" (p. 232). The constant comparative method was used to analyze in-depth interviews and secondary data sources including syllabi and instructional materials. The data revealed that although the participants never used the word *disposition* during interviews, they did purposefully select curriculum materials and pedagogical techniques that fostered inclusive dispositions in their students: the future administrators. The results of this study suggested that

dispositions toward advocating for students can be specifically taught, or at the very least modeled, to adult learners and future school leaders.

As evidenced in the following study, not all educators feel that pre-service programs prepared them to act as advocates in public schools. Bratlien and McGuire (2002) conducted a study examining 909 teachers' perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of their pre-service preparation program after being in the classroom for three years. Using a Likert scale, participants were asked to rate their feeling of overall preparedness in being an advocate. Of those, 42.2% felt moderately well prepared, 15.6% felt somewhat prepared, 6.4% felt not prepared at all (Bratlien & McGuire, 2002). These results showed that teachers were being called on to be advocates in schools, yet did not necessarily feel prepared in *how* to advocate. This study further demonstrated the policy implications surrounding advocacy as preparation programs need to examine its role within a curricular context.

In some instances, school leaders hold advocacy dispositions, yet need specific prompting to elicit that knowledge. In a study of the use of self-reflection as a tool to nurture moral leadership capacity, Branson (2007) found that principals came to understand how life experiences and definitions of self resulted in leadership behaviors which were aligned with aspects of democracy as specified by Dewey (1915). That is, to "successfully act rightly, justly and to promote good" (Branson, 2007. p. 492). Through structured activities that required discussing significant life experiences, these school leaders found that dispositions such as respect, concern for others and empowerment had a direct impact on their decisions toward others, yet that

they needed guidance and nurturing to develop these dispositions fully. The aspect of nurturing was relevant to the current study in that I questioned what influenced literacy leaders to orient themselves toward advocacy, in effect, wondering where that desire came from and how did it evolve?

In a study on co-created leadership dispositions, Wasonga and Murphy (2007) stated that "educators today are searching for principles of leadership that would ensure a stable foundation for the steady, ordered progress of academic achievement in the face of rising standards, expectations, competition and accountability"(p. 20). The researchers studied twenty-one teachers who were identified by faculty as aspiring school leaders. Participants responded to questions regarding leadership dispositions including collaborating, active listening, patience, and trust/trustworthiness as identified in previous research by Murphy, Hunt, and Wasonga (2004). Examples of questions pertinent to the current study were: 1) *Describe instances where you have witnessed the practice of this disposition in your school;* 2) *Explain why this disposition is important to a successful leader;* 3) *Describe instances where the application/practice of this disposition has been especially successful?* The authors concluded that dispositions are "potentialities which may be nurtured, cultivated and practiced by leaders in hierarchical organizations" (p. 29).

Therefore, as the above literature indicated, dispositions have the potential to be elicited, taught, and nurtured in others in situations ripe with collaboration and grounded in a common understanding of inclusive leadership. Although not all

leaders feel prepared to advocate, it is becoming increasingly common to be called to

do so through professional standards, especially those involved in literacy.

<p align="center">Advocacy Grounded in Literacy Leaders</p>

In their chapter entitled *Reading Specialists: On Becoming Literacy Leaders*,

Wepner and Quatroche (2008) created a conceptual framework of reading personnel

based on previous work with educational deans (Wepner, D'Onofrio, & Wilhite,

2003, 2006). The framework identified four leadership dimensions and subsequent

characteristics of successful reading personnel: *intellectual, emotional, social and*

moral. The moral dimension is most applicable to the concept of advocacy in literacy

leaders as defined as 'a sense of conscience and accountability, and the desire to

negotiate energetically for mutually satisfactory solutions to problems and broad

social ideas" (Wepner & Quatroche, 2008, p. 38).

Viewing advocacy in this way leads one to question where that sense of

conscience comes from in individuals. Are there particular experiences that literacy

leaders have gone through which strengthen an already existing drive to move toward

solutions for both common and unique problems encountered in literacy education?

Or, do particular experiences serve as building blocks in the creation of a sense of

accountability for others that spring forth from the compilation of these experiences?

This moral compass, whether innate and/or nurtured is worth exploring in terms of

literacy leadership. As Wepner and Quatroche (2008) point out, reading professionals

not only do the right things in their practice, but have the commitment to do the right

things as part of their character as a literacy leader. Successful literacy leaders

<p align="center">25</p>