



A Proposed Theory of School Librarian Leadership: A Meta-Ethnographic Approach

[Nancy Everhart](#), PhD, Professor, Florida State University, School of Information, 252 Louis Shores Building

[Melissa P. Johnston](#), PhD, Assistant Professor, University of West Georgia, College of Education, 125 Education Annex

Abstract

This paper uses a meta-ethnographic approach to examine a core body of research conducted primarily by one iSchool research center that has bolstered its curriculum in support of school librarian leadership in the past decade. Substantive studies, conducted by faculty and doctoral students, have focused on various phases of leadership from pre-service to mastery with emphases on technology integration. The goal of this paper is to go beyond the traditional summarizing of the research in the area to synthesizing and reinterpreting published findings for the purpose of building a foundation on which to investigate a theoretical framework for leadership by school librarians.

Introduction

The benefits of school librarian leadership to both students and teachers have been well established. When school librarians take on leadership roles, they contribute to creating better learning opportunities for students through the librarians' collaborating with teachers, providing engaging instruction, and integrating technology. Although these advantages of leadership by school librarians have been supported by research (Scholastic 2016) only a limited number of studies have focused on how school librarians themselves actually evolve as leaders and what supports this evolution.

A notable exception is a core body of research conducted by faculty and doctoral students at the Florida State University School of Information (iSchool) PALM Center (Partnerships Advancing Library Media Center), which focuses on various phases of leadership from pre-service to mastery with emphases on technology integration. School librarian leadership has been studied in a variety of contexts, but there has not yet been a cohesive review that would synthesize the results from the areas examined to contribute to theory development in the field. To provide a starting point in development of a theory of fostering and enacting effective school librarian

leadership, this study attempts such a synthesis, placing an emphasis on the collected research from Florida State University.

For the purposes of this research, school librarian leadership is defined as “the ability to influence and inspire others to meet identified goals or to share an identified vision.” This definition of school librarian leadership was formulated in the Florida State University’s Project LEAD program from which many of the studies examined during our study originated (Everhart and Dresang 2007). Students and faculty involved with Project LEAD examined and discussed various definitions of leadership, coming to consensus on a characterization that both embodies current roles of school librarians and enables expansion of these roles in the future.

Research Purpose

The need for theoretical foundations for research in the library and information science (LIS) field is well documented (e.g., Hjørland 1998; Julien and Duggan 2000; Leckie, Given, and Buschman 2010; Pettigrew and McKechnie 2001). Because of the lack of theories on which to build, LIS researchers tend to borrow from other disciplines to address LIS issues. In the case of research relating to school librarianship, the tendency is to borrow from the field of education. Educational leadership contributes a wealth of theories and models for the leadership role in schools, but that role is consistently defined for a principal. To date, no specific theory has been developed to characterize the school librarian as an educational leader (Johnston 2015).

Robert Grover and Jack Glazier have defined the purpose of a theory as “to explain and predict relationships among phenomena, to give the practitioner an understanding of specific relationships, and to guide research” (1986, 230). In the research reported here, the observed phenomena are leadership practices of the school librarian. To explore these relationships, the researchers employed a meta-ethnographic approach. Meta-ethnography uses findings reported in previous studies as building blocks for gaining deeper understanding of a particular phenomena (Finfgeld-Connett 2006) and was deemed to be highly applicable to this initial stage of theory development.

Methodology

Meta-ethnography, a method developed by George W. Noblit and R. Dwight Hare (1988), enables researchers to understand and synthesize the findings of two or more qualitative studies concerning a similar research question or topic. Mike Weed (2005) has described meta-ethnography as a form of meta-interpretation. Going beyond the traditional literature review, which looks at individual studies, meta-ethnography facilitates generalizations through extracting concepts, metaphors, and themes (Burns 1989). A core element of meta-ethnography is “reciprocal translation,” which means that the interpretations of studies are “translated into one another” (Noblit and Hare 1988, 11) or “exploring how the second order constructs are related to each other and sorting concepts into conceptual categories or piles, thus translating qualitative studies into one another” (Toye et al. 2014). Assembling the findings of multiple primary studies using a systematic process, such as meta-ethnography, can help generate a comprehensive and generalizable theory, and, therefore, meta-ethnography was deemed particularly suitable as the method for this study whereby we attempt to construct meaning to aid in theoretical development.

We argue that a meta-ethnography should be interpretive rather than aggregative. We make the case that it should take the form of reciprocal translations of studies into one another... Since research and evaluation funding are tied to improvement of practice, it is especially important that interpretivists discuss how they construct explanations, how interpretive explanations are different from other ways of constructing explanations, and what can reasonably be said about some sets of studies. (Noblit and Hare 1988, 11)

The goal of this study is to go beyond the traditional summarizing of the research in the area to synthesizing and reinterpreting published findings (Strike and Posner 1983) for the purpose of building a foundation on which to construct a theoretical framework for school librarian leadership. Noblit and Hare (1988) provided a seven-step framework for meta-ethnography, which was employed in this study (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Seven steps of Noblit and Hare's meta-ethnography.

1.	Getting started.
2.	Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest.
3.	Reading the studies.
4.	Determining how the studies are related.
5.	Translating the studies into one another.
6.	Synthesizing translations.
7.	Expressing the synthesis.

Step 1: Getting Started

“A meta-ethnography starts, like all inquiries, with an interest in some setting, topic, argument, issue, controversy, or opportunity. This interest, for interpretivists, need not be overly specific. Often it starts simply from seeing what different qualitative researchers have to say about something and being concerned with how to compare their accounts” (Noblit and Hare 1988, 3). In this case, we have noted that there has been an increase in the number of studies examining the leadership role of the school librarian in recent years, but this increase has not yet led to any significant theoretical development. Our research reported here was motivated by our interest in beginning to develop a conceptual model for school librarian leadership.

Step 2: Deciding What Is Relevant to the Initial Interest

The scope of a meta-ethnographic study will often be more restricted than that of many narrative reviews, which is perfectly acceptable. In their 1988 guide, Noblit and Hare note that examining two to six studies is commonplace. Unlike meta-analysis, meta-ethnography does not attempt to summarize the entire body of available literature on a topic. “Meta-ethnography focuses on

conceptual insight, and including too many studies might make conceptual analysis ‘unwieldy’ or make it difficult to maintain insight or sufficient familiarity” (Toye et al. 2014).

Factors in deciding what studies are relevant involves knowing who the audience for the synthesis is, what is credible and interesting to them, what accounts are available to address the audience’s interests, and what the researchers’ interests are in the effort; meta-ethnography has no defined sampling procedure (Noblit and Hare 1988).

Additionally, with theory building as the overarching goal of this research, theoretical (not random or stratified) sampling is appropriate. Theoretical sampling means that cases are selected because they are particularly suitable for illuminating and extending relationships and logic among constructs (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007) and setting boundaries for theoretical development (Swanson 2007). Therefore, we focused our efforts on six studies (including those in which we were directly engaged) conducted in one iSchool research center that examined various phases of school librarian leadership from pre-service to mastery with emphases on technology integration. These studies already had common threads, including the researchers involved and focuses on school librarian leadership, technology integration, LIS education, and career development. In several instances, the same set of respondents were the focus of the research and analysis. Another common element was that all studies were either peer reviewed or vetted as dissertations, and supported by federal grant funding.

Another substantive reason for the focus on these studies relates to the idea of meaning in context. Kati Rantala and Eeva Hellstrom have noted that the re-analysis of inherited secondary data can be problematic because “the researcher conducting the re-analysis might understand the data differently from its collector” (2001, 88). As a consequence, meaning in context is lost. However, if the interpretations of the original researcher are used, then the focus on meaning in context of the original study is retained. The interpretations can convey such meaning in context, but raw data cannot. When researchers bring together many different interpretations, the evidence in an ethnographic analysis is strengthened by discovering common themes and differences and by building new interpretations of the topic of interest (Schreiber, Crooks, and Stern 1997). By choosing studies to which we ourselves had contributed, we were able to dissect, as well as synthesize, the findings with a focused lens as well as avoid misinterpretation.

Step 3: Reading the Studies

Introduction

As some time had passed since the research was conducted, we thoroughly re-read the studies. Working independently, we wrote down themes and highlighted evidence in the text that supported our initial choices for inclusion in the meta-ethnography. In some respects, extracting themes is somewhat redundant since the initial choice of studies is dependent on themes (Atkins et al. 2007). However, re-reading the studies allows for immersion in the data where new discoveries may emerge.

In this section we provide a review of each of these chosen studies.

Study 1. Developing a Leadership Curriculum: A Research-Based Approach

Everhart, Nancy, and Eliza T. Dresang. 2007. "Integrating Research Results and National Board Certification Standards into a Leadership Curriculum for School Library Media Specialists." *Journal for Education in Library and Information Science* 48 (4): 272–83.

Nancy Everhart and Eliza T. Dresang examined possible ways to integrate a stronger leadership component into a university school librarianship preparation program. Because research showed that National Board Certified teachers, on average, are more involved in leadership activities in their schools and the certification process is itself a leadership activity (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards 2001), Everhart and Dresang developed a four-course leadership curriculum based on National Board tenets. They posed these research questions: "How does systematic, in-depth research make a difference in course development? To what extent will it validate what faculty would have done without it and to what extent does it change what would have been done?; and Is there a need for leadership courses based on National Board tenets?" (Everhart and Dresang 2007, 274).

To investigate curriculum development in this area and answer their research questions, Everhart and Dresang employed multiple methods. First, an extensive review of the literature in the areas of teacher leadership and National Board Certification, school librarian leadership, and the impact of National Board Certification in relation to student achievement was conducted.

The early data that had been collected on those school librarians who had completed the National Board Certification process was also examined. Both researchers gathered informal data from successful and unsuccessful candidates through their participation in the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards school librarian electronic discussion group. To obtain the views of those who were unsuccessful candidates, the researchers also employed a school librarian mentor who interviewed five unsuccessful candidates.

In their needs assessment Everhart and Dresang found prominent themes important to consider in the development of the leadership program and curriculum. One was the importance of the National Board learning community as a support. School librarian-specific mentors and an online discussion group dedicated to the National Board process for school librarians provided valuable reinforcement to candidates as they advanced through the process. A surprising theme was the need for help with teaching literature appreciation.

Those who were unsuccessful in their efforts to earn certification employed definitions and practices in collaboration and in integration of technology that differed from those of successful candidates. Unsuccessful candidates viewed collaboration and integration of technology as one-shot events rather than as elements ingrained in pedagogy—and illuminated the need for further instruction in these areas. Candidates had difficulty documenting (in the portfolio entry) how their leadership in the school, the professional arena, and the community has positively impacted student achievement. The need to improve reflective thinking and the analytical writing skills required to be a successful candidate was noted by respondents. But even those who were unsuccessful regarded the certification-attempt process as a very valuable professional development experience.

Study 2. Impact of School Librarian Preparation Programs on Leadership Development

Smith, Daniella. 2009. "Self Perceptions of Leadership Potential: A Study of Teacher-Leaders Educated to be School Library Media Specialists Who Lead." PhD. diss. Florida State University, Tallahassee. <<http://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/islandora/object/fsu%3A168493>> (accessed July 14, 2016).

Daniella Smith (2009) surveyed thirty pre-service school librarians who completed the leadership program (mentioned in the earlier discussion of the study by Everhart and Dresang); Smith's purpose was determining the factors that impacted pre-service school librarians' level of self-perceived transformational leadership potential. Her research was based on the following research questions: 1) To what extent does leadership education facilitate the development of self-perceived transformational leadership behaviors in pre-service school librarians who were teacher-leaders? 2) To what extent does the assessment of leadership potential at the beginning of the Master's in Library and Information Studies degree program focusing on leadership correlate with the self-perceived transformational leadership potential of pre-service school librarians who were teacher-leaders? 3) To what extent does social context impact the self-perceived transformational leadership potential of pre-service school librarians who were teacher-leaders and participated in a Master's in Library and Information Studies degree program focusing on leadership?

The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), which measures transformational leadership (Kouzes and Posner 2007), was used by Smith to calculate the respondents' five transformational leadership dimensions: Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart.

Participants were also sent a second survey designed by Smith; this survey included closed and open-ended questions designed to obtain demographic variables and the participants' perceptions of the skills they learned in each of the five transformational leadership dimensions.

Findings revealed that the participant's leadership training facilitated the development of their self-perceived transformational leadership behaviors to a significantly higher level than the established national norms¹ for the LPI in two areas: Modeling the Way and Enabling Others to Act. "They were confident that they could create positive impacts on their schools because of the leadership skills they learned" (Smith 2009, 62).

The participants' comments also indicated that the leadership curriculum taught them to be transformational leaders. Specifically, the participants attributed this change to their development of new technology skills that gave them the confidence and knowledge to take on leadership roles and build their capacity for leading in the integration of technology for learning. Yet, even with this confidence, Smith found that risk-taking was still a challenge for these participants.

¹ The Leadership Practices Inventory is a 30-item assessment that provides a way for individual leaders to measure the frequency of their own leadership behaviors on a 10-point scale. Having been used in over 500 research studies, the authors have produced normative data for five leadership practices (Modeling the Way, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Challenging the Process, Enabling Others to Act, and Encouraging the Heart) that provides insight into the respondent leadership attributes.

Smith concluded that it was the technology and leadership skills students learned as a part of their preparation through the leadership curriculum that helped them to exemplify each of the five transformational leadership dimensions.

This study indicates that school librarian preparation programs that place great emphasis on technology integration and leadership can have a substantial impact on how technology is integrated into schools through creating confident school librarians who have the technology knowledge and the leadership skills to enact the expected leadership role in their schools.

Study 3. Individual Leadership of National Board Certified School Librarians

Everhart, Nancy, Marcia A. Mardis, and Melissa P. Johnston. 2011. "National Board Certified School Librarians' Leadership in Technology Integration: Results of a National Survey." *School Library Media Research* 14.

<www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org/aasl/files/content/aaslpubsandjournals/slr/vol14/SLR_NationalBoardCertified_V14.pdf> (accessed July 16, 2016).

A national survey *School Library Media Specialist and Technology Integration Survey* was conducted in 2010. The survey was focused on how National Board Certified school librarians (n=295) integrate technology into their school library programs. Within the survey an emphasis was placed on leadership roles. The study by Nancy Everhart, Marcia A. Mardis, and Melissa P. Johnston provided an initial attempt to characterize school librarians' technology-integration activities in the contexts of what school librarians know, what they do, and how they grow as professionals—tenets of the National Board process. To achieve National Board Certification, these school librarians had to successfully demonstrate their ability to integrate technology into instruction and document accomplishments in working with various communities—school, professional, and external.

The survey results indicated that these school librarians worked in affluent schools that offered them sufficient technology resources, support staff, and flexible scheduling. They were able to be successful as technology leaders working with students by using technology to pique learners' interest (95 percent), aligning instruction with professional and technology standards (93 percent), differentiating instruction (87 percent), modeling the use of technology (79 percent), and teaching learners to identify the appropriate technology for their needs (82 percent). Most respondents also were fully or substantially involved in helping learners create products using various technology (72 percent) and in facilitating learners' use of technology to express new ideas (70 percent). However, only 35 percent provided assistive and adaptive technologies for learners.

A large majority of respondents reported being fully or substantially involved in collaborating with teachers to use technology in their instruction (74 percent), providing teachers with access to technology that enhances their instruction (80 percent), promoting learning activities that connect technology to content standards (77 percent), and advocating for the use of technology for alternative demonstrations of student learning (73 percent). However, few respondents were fully or substantially involved in the initial process of setting learning objectives and promoting the integration of technology in classroom instruction (41 percent), and even fewer respondents fully or substantially provided teachers with technological alternatives for assessing student learning (38 percent). When school librarian leaders were asked to report on their technology leadership outside of their school buildings, they revealed much lower levels of involvement in

district-wide policy making (57 percent) and information-sharing activities: presenting to peers at conferences (39 percent) and to community members (55 percent) about technology.

Study 4. Enablers and Barriers to Technology Leadership

Johnston, Melissa P. 2012. "School Librarians as Technology Integration Leaders: Enablers and Barriers to Leadership Enactment." *School Library Research* 15. <www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org/aasl/files/content/aaslpubsandjournals/slr/vol15/SLR_School_Librarians_as_Technology_Integration_Leaders_V15.pdf> (accessed July 16, 2016).

To further define the school librarians' leadership role in technology, Melissa P. Johnston used data from the two open-ended questions in the *School Library Media Specialist and Technology Integration Survey* (Everhart, Mardis, and Johnston 2011). These questions asked respondents to "Think back about the activities in the preceding statements, specifically those in which you are fully involved. What enables you to be involved at that level?" and "Again, think about those activities addressed earlier. Are there any activities in which you'd like to be more involved than you are right now? If so, please tell us about the barriers that hinder your involvement."

The purpose of Johnston's research was to identify what enabled those most-accomplished school librarians to thrive in the role of technology-integration leader, as well as the barriers they face. In her research Johnston assumed that the leadership practices of school librarians are essentially those of teacher leaders and based her research on the educational leadership theory of distributed leadership, which asserts that that leadership is about more than just people in formal leadership positions and attempts to acknowledge all contributors, formal or informal, who participate in leadership practice, pooling their abilities and expertise (Spillane 2006). This view of leadership places emphasis on the importance of context and how it is a defining element of leadership practice. Therefore, understanding how these aspects enable and constrain leadership practice is necessary.

The enablers and barriers were extracted from the text of survey participants' responses to the open-ended questions and coded into categories using an existing coding scheme taken from teacher leadership research, the Four Domains of Supports and Barriers to Teacher Leadership (Zinn 1997). Data analysis resulted in the identification of the enablers and barriers school librarians experience in enacting a leadership role in technology integration. Johnston found that Relationships (Domain One) were found as frequently occurring enablers for school librarians' enacting a leadership role in technology integration, yet these same relationships could also constrain leadership enactment. Relationships with principals, teachers, district administrators, other school librarians, and the instructional technologist can serve as enablers or barriers in leadership enactment.

The world of education is full of formal and informal structures that can either support or constrain leadership, and this research found that the most frequently occurring barriers were in the area of Institutional Structure (Domain Two), including lack of leadership opportunities, professional development opportunities, and resources.

The most-frequently identified enablers identified were in the Intellectual and Psycho-Social area (Domain Four). These enablers reflected the school librarians' willingness and ability to engage in a leadership role and assume responsibilities, and provided school librarians with the beliefs,

value system, desire to learn and grow professionally, and the confidence to support other educators in leadership endeavors.

Johnston's research serves as the initial formal identification of enablers and barriers that school librarians experience when enacting, or attempting to enact, a technology-integration leadership role.

Study 5. School-Wide Leadership for the First-Year School Librarian

Mardis, Marcia A., and Nancy Everhart. 2014. "Stakeholders as Researchers: A Multiple Case Study of Using Cooperative Inquiry to Develop and Document the Formative Leadership Experiences of New School Library Professionals." *Library and Information Science Research* 36 (1): 3–15.

In this study Marcia A. Mardis and Nancy Everhart followed six first-year school librarians who had been educated in a leadership-focused LIS Master's degree program. Given the opportunities of this program, the researchers conducted interviews and analyzed journal entries to address a central question: Did the graduates actually enact leadership roles when they became practicing school librarians?

The researchers prepared the participants to exercise leadership through Cooperative Inquiry. This group process was used to merge the viewpoints and experiences of school librarians, teachers, technology personnel, administrators, and other key school stakeholders in solving a mutually agreed-upon problem: *What is an issue facing our school community that can be addressed with technology?* With a budget of \$6,000, each participant was told to, with her team, adapt that guiding question to their own situation over an entire school year.

Each of the participants had varying levels of success. What worked was strategically inviting team members, based on their unique abilities, to represent a variety of perspectives. Those perspectives included those of the tech coordinator and principal. Other elements of success were making clear this was a group process, providing strong group facilitation by running well-organized and focused meetings, demonstrating and fostering group trust and respect, leading sensitive and diplomatic discussions, emphasizing group ownership, providing snacks, facilitating communication between meetings, and doing formal data collection throughout the process. Ineffective were disagreeing about devices, ordering devices before clarifying the question to be answered or goal to pursue was solidified, allowing members of the group to volunteer, lacking a shared purpose, relying on the school librarian to be the sole leader, and having a school librarian in a new leadership role who was formerly a teacher in the same school.

All the participants, regardless of their levels of success, had confidence in their leadership abilities (confidence derived from their education), embraced the process, and planned on incorporating it in their own leadership style.

Study 6. Leadership in the Adoption of Digital Textbooks

Kang, Ji Hei. 2015. "The Leadership Role of School Librarians in the Adoption of Digital Textbooks: Evaluating School Librarians' Stages of Concern in Florida and South Korea." PhD diss. Florida State University, College of Communication and Information, Tallahassee.

<<http://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/islandora/object/fsu:252978/datastream/PDF/view>> (accessed July 16, 2016).

The purpose of Ji Hei Kang's study was to identify and describe the concerns of 209 Floridian and 209 South Korean school librarians during the initial phases of mandated implementation of digital textbooks at each location. For each setting, the study surveyed the stages of concern as evidenced by school librarians' practices and experiences, but also classified those stages by demographic background using the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) as a theoretical framework.

Kang found that the highest number of school librarians' responses in both places indicated that they were in the unconcerned stage, implying they were more concerned about a multitude of other obligations, activities, or innovations. Because of this, the CBAM theory anticipated that school librarians would potentially have resistance toward digital textbook implementation in the two locations and underscored a need for various interventions. Since school librarians were found to be apathetic even though digital textbook integration would be put into effect soon, professional development to inform them of the characteristics and strong points of digital textbooks, as well as restrictions for using them, was found to be urgent.

Those who were unconcerned and less experienced expressed a need to exchange information with colleagues at home and at conferences. More-experienced school librarians, who also used e-books frequently for personal pursuits, said that they would benefit from encouragement and being involved in school policy decisions relating to digital textbook use.

Step 4: Determining How the Studies Are Related

This first stage of synthesis determined the relationships between the different studies. Noblit and Hare (1988) recommend creating a list of metaphors, phrases, ideas and/or concepts (and their relations), and juxtaposing them. Key concepts identified were resistance, growth, relationships, communication, and confidence. The identified concepts represent different aspects of the leadership role of the school librarian and factors (found in the studies) that impact the enactment of this role.

The concept of resistance represents beliefs and attitudes expressed in findings that demonstrate school librarians' resistance to accepting and enacting the leadership role in practice, including both internal and external factors.

The growth concept emerged from the studies to represent those findings related to how school librarians' growth was demonstrated and to factors that had been identified as necessary for leadership growth.

The concept of relationships refers to those vital relationships with others, relationships that have emerged from the studies as being necessary for school librarians.

The communication concept represents ways that the studies revealed communication plays a part in school librarian leadership.

Finally, confidence emerged as a concept, representing an important and often overlooked aspect of leadership.

Step 5: Translating the Studies into Each Other

Modeling the approach of Nicki Britten et al. (2002), a grid was created wherein we placed the key concepts of each study. The grid also included methodological details (see table 1). This exercise proved to crystallize the findings as well as provide an impetus that made it easy to move to the next step.

Table 1. Methods and concepts in the examined school librarian leadership studies.

Study Author	Everhart and Dresang	Smith	Everhart, Mardis, and Johnston	Johnston	Mardis and Everhart	Kang
Method	Survey, Interview, content analysis	Survey	Survey	Survey - Secondary Analysis	Content analysis of artifacts	Survey
Sample	5 unsuccessful National Board candidates, 357 discussion board posts (mid-career school librarians)	30 recent graduates of a school librarian leadership program (pre-service school librarians)	295 National Board Certified school librarians	295 National Board Certified school librarians	6 recent LIS graduates/first-year school librarians	209 school librarians in Florida and 209 school librarians in South Korea
Data Collection/ Instrument	Literature reviews, interviews, discussion forum analysis	<i>Leadership Practices Inventory</i>	<i>The School Library Media Specialist and Technology Integration Survey</i>	<i>The School Library Media Specialist and Technology Integration Survey</i>	Journals, interviews	<i>Stages of Concern questionnaire</i>
Theory	Grounded Theory	Transformative Leadership	Formative Leadership	Distributed Leadership	Formative Leadership	Concerns-Based Adoption Model
Concepts						
Resistance	Unsuccessful candidates unwilling to embrace the National Board definitions	Scored low on risk-taking behaviors	Perceptions that tech leadership role is not their job; shared tech knowledge within their own schools, but not with the wider community of	Replaced by tech specialist in decision making; excluded by administrators from decision making & leadership opportunities; some	Technology coordinator blocked decisions; New school librarians expressed need to collect more formal data when	No desire to embrace digital textbooks as an innovation; felt that supporting implementation of digital textbooks

			educators outside their schools; excluded from tech decision making	expressed lack of interest in technology; some felt that there is no time for tech integration among their other roles	implementing change.	would take too much time
Growth	National Board Certification is a growth process	Grew into role as a school librarian leader; gained technology expertise	Ensured their continued growth by staying abreast of innovations; increased tech expertise by: reading professional materials and online blogs by other school librarians, participated in professions organizations, professional development opportunities and formal education	Through gaining tech expertise; taking on leadership opportunities; commitment to continued professional growth (supported by professional organizations)	Action and reflection cycle enabled growth	The more they used e-books on a personal level the more willing they were to embrace digital textbooks and be involved in school policy decisions; Non-users expressed a need for professional development and conversations about digital textbooks.
Relationships	School librarian-specific mentors	Higher than average on the leadership dimension of Modeling the Way and Enabling Others to Act; recognizing the	Collaborating with teachers (to use technology in their instruction); not involved in forging partnerships in the community	Building/developing relationships with: teachers, principals tech specialist; other school librarians; district-level personnel to enable leadership	Careful team selection that includes tech coordinator and principal lead to success; relationships with professors and	Principals can ease the concerns of school librarians in top-down innovations; exchanging information with professional

		accomplishments of others; formed lifelong relationships with cohort; saw value in professional networking			other school librarian participants	colleagues was seen as desirable, especially by the less-experienced respondents.
Communication	Online forums focused on school librarians and attempting National Board Certification	Learned to vigorously advocate for collaboration; more vocal in sharing expertise with teachers	Communicate with: decision makers, teachers, administrators, and other school librarians	Communicate with: decision makers, teachers, administrators, and other school librarians to enable leadership	Creating meeting agendas, facilitating discussions, and modeling the cooperative inquiry process demonstrated leadership with teams.	Prefer communicating in small groups with other school librarians about innovations in person or electronically
Confidence	Achieving the highest credential in the teaching profession earns respect and builds confidence.	Leadership education made them feel comfortable in leadership roles; confident they could make a difference; mastery of technology gave them confidence to use it for leadership with teachers and students; gained confidence to be a school librarian.	Tech knowledge gave them confidence to use technology for their own instruction and for teaching teachers to use technology with learners.	Tech expertise, experience and education led to the self-confidence to take on leadership roles; trust from administrators in school librarians' ability to lead gave them confidence; desire to make a difference for students and teachers empowered survey respondents.	Tech expertise and feeling of having a strong foundation of leadership education gave these new school librarians confidence.	Personal use of e-books increases confidence about dealing with digital textbooks in the future.

Second-order Interpretation						
	<p>School librarians took a narrow view of leadership, but leadership specifics were discovered to integrate into school librarian education; advice from insiders in the profession was valued more than advice from people outside the profession.</p>	<p>Technology was a vehicle for building confidence and leadership skills; professional networking within their cohort and with mentors and via professional organizations formed a solid foundation for leadership in their role.</p>	<p>Technology was a vehicle for building confidence and leadership skills; school librarian leaders are committed to professional growth, which facilitates leadership; relationships with administrators and teachers impact leadership enactment.</p>	<p>Technology was a vehicle for building confidence and leadership skills; desire to make a difference for students and teachers pushed respondents to take on leadership roles, be involved with professional organizations, and commit to professional growth and relationships with stakeholders.</p>	<p>Technology was a vehicle for building confidence and leadership skills; school librarians can be taught leadership strategies in degree programs.</p>	<p>Technology integration implemented with a top-down approach results in uncertainty; interacting with small groups of peers is helpful in the process of large-scale technology integration; school librarians who use technology on a personal level can assist with leading others.</p>

Step 6: Synthesizing Translations

This first stage of synthesis determined the relationships between the studies. To do this, we followed Noblit and Hare's recommendations (1988) and together created a list of metaphors, phrases, ideas, and/or concepts and their relationships; see table 2. Fleshing out concepts and building these interpretations grounded in the findings of the separate studies is in line with the constant comparative method of grounded theory work (Watson et al. 2008). Concepts derived from each of the separate studies were translated into second-order interpretations, which have been defined as discovering a "whole in a set of parts" (Noblit and Hare 1988, 16).

We re-evaluated the individual studies independently and constructed second sets of second-order interpretations autonomously. This process involved detailed study of differences and similarities among studies with the aim of producing new interpretive context. The main concepts from paper one were compared to paper two, and the synthesis of these two papers with paper three, continuing through the six studies. We then discussed our separate findings for the purpose of coming to an agreement.

Dialogue immediately proceeded to constructing third-order interpretations, which are prevalent truths or themes and can serve as theoretical underpinnings (Noblit and Hare 1988). We developed the third-order interpretations by in-depth discussion and synthesis, identical to how we translated main concepts into second-order interpretations. Some researchers argue that the procedure for constructing third-order interpretations remains ill-defined in the literature (Atkins et al. 2008). By re-examining other meta-ethnographic studies and by drawing upon our own knowledge base of the field of school librarianship and our close involvement in the studies examined, we were able to overcome this barrier.

Table 2. Interpretations.

Concepts	Second-Order Interpretations	Third-Order Interpretations
Resistance: to professionally defined leadership roles; to broadly and boldly sharing knowledge; from technology coordinators	School librarians value leadership advice from those inside the profession rather than those from outside.	School librarian leadership is more traditional than transformational.
Growth: via formalized processes, personal exploration, and dedication	Technology can be a vehicle for building confidence and leadership skills.	School librarian leadership can be taught to some degree but individual and school characteristics influence the extent that leadership can be exerted.
Relationships: with peers, teachers, students, and principals	Relationships with others impact leadership	

Communication: within and beyond the school and the professional communities; face to face and electronic	enactment.	School librarian leadership develops more comfortably and successfully with peers.
Confidence: acquired via education in leadership skills and strategies, and via personal use and expertise with technology	School librarians are hesitant to share their expertise beyond their school buildings.	School librarian leadership requires a mind-set.

Step 7: Expressing the Synthesis

The final stage of meta-ethnography is “expressing the synthesis,” which is described by Noblit and Hare (1988) as communicating with an audience. The needs of the audience influence both the form and substance of the synthesis. Expressing the synthesis can take many forms, including publication, videos, or infographics. In this case, we have chosen to express the synthesis in this paper, but also to extend the synthesis into a conceptual model for school librarian leadership. Potential audiences for this type of synthesis include practitioners, school library researchers, and qualitative researchers in the field of school librarianship. Practitioners may be most interested in the implications of this work for their own practice. Yet the main audience for this synthesis is researchers, who may be more interested in the details of this interpretive synthesis methodology and the potential of using it for theory building and future research (Britten et al. 2002).

Toward a Theory of School Librarian Leadership

Introduction

Many differing definitions of “theory” exist, and the choice of how theory is defined is an important one as it sets the purpose for theory building and, ultimately, what is produced (Lynham 2000). The definition to be used for the purpose of this research is that theory is “a coherent description, explanation, and representation of observed or experienced phenomena” (Gioia and Pitre, 1990, 587), with theory building described as “the purposeful process or recurring cycle by which coherent descriptions, explanations, and representations of observed or experienced phenomena are generated, verified, and refined” (Lynham 2000, 161). Good theory building should result in two kinds of knowledge: practical-outcome knowledge, usually in the form of explanatory knowledge, and process knowledge in the form of increased understanding of how something works and what it means (Dubin 1978).

In this research we attempt the first step in theory building, which is the development of a conceptual model. The concepts identified through our meta-ethnography provided the building blocks on which to build; we created this foundation by organizing the way they fit together

(Jabareen 2009). Phase one of developing a conceptual model begins with conceptual development, which requires the formulation of “initial ideas in a way that depicts current, best, most informed understanding and explanation of the phenomenon, issue, or problem in the relevant world context” (Lynham 2002, 231). “The output of this phase is an explicit, informed, conceptual framework that often takes the form of a model and/or metaphor that is developed from the theorist’s knowledge of and experience with the phenomenon, issue, or problem concerned” (Lynham 2002, 232). A conceptual model is an interpretive approach that seeks to provide understanding; there is no expectation that theory will have predictive power (Lynham 2000).

The meta-ethnographic method allowed us to examine a body of recent school librarian leadership studies, translate them into each other, and synthesize the translations. This approach, which has rarely been used in the field of library and information science research, enabled us to “view the forest for the trees,” reflecting on the overall meaning of school librarian leadership as it currently exists. Meta-ethnography provided a technique to extract and analyze insights from primary studies to identify categories and key metaphors, ideas, concepts, and relationships in each one, and recognize patterns that emerged across the studies (Campbell et al. 2011; Noblit and Hare 1988). Then, by taking the extra contemplative step of developing third-order interpretations of the data, we were able to extend the interpretations into conclusions. We used the results to develop an informed conceptual model that provides an initial understanding and explanation of the nature and dynamics of school library leadership.

Proposed Model of School Librarian Leadership

In this first phase of theory building, through propositions we have identified key concepts and the initial explanation of their interdependence. The development of an informed conceptual model is fundamental to all theory-building research. The resulting conceptual model represents the concepts that emerged from the six studies we analyzed and the relationship between them. Figure 2 shows our conceptual model.

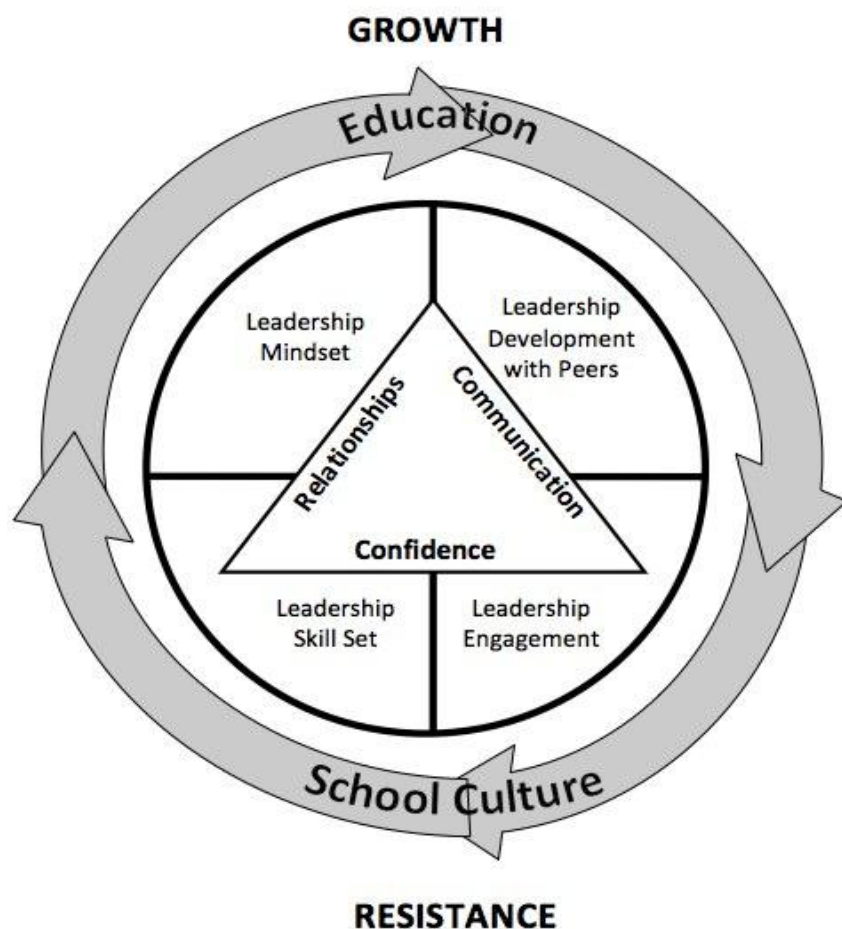


Figure 2. Conceptual model of school librarian leadership.

Defining Concepts

A theory's purpose is to make sense of the real world by identifying concepts that describe phenomena and ordering these concepts in a meaningful way by exploring relationships between them (Lynham 2000). This research explored the phenomenon of school librarian leadership, and findings include a set of five concepts that emerged from the meta-ethnography: resistance, growth, relationships, communication, and confidence. Each of these concepts has its "own attributes, characteristics, assumptions, limitations, distinct perspectives, and specific function within the conceptual framework that shed more light on the phenomenon" (Jabareen 2009, 53). In this section we explicitly define the concepts, what leadership by school librarians looks like in practice, and make the connection to the supporting evidence, which is summarized in table 1, and below through the narrative definition and description of each concept. As previously articulated, school librarian leadership is defined as "the ability to influence and inspire others to meet identified goals or to share an identified vision" (Everhart and Dresang 2007).

Resistance. *Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary* defines resistance as "refusal to accept something new or different; effort made to stop or to fight against someone or something" (n.d.-

d). We define the concept of resistance as anything that hinders the potential or actual leadership by a school librarian. Thus, the idea of resistance is associated with identified professional actions and perceptions such as “a leadership task is not my job,” a perception that change is not needed, lack of risk taking, apathy, and a general lack of leadership activities.

Resistance emerged as a concept in multiple studies that were examined. Smith (2009) found that risk taking was a challenge for school librarians, indicating their resistance to step outside of their comfort zone. Everhart, Mardis, and Johnston (2011) found this resistance in school librarians who weren't fully involved in the technology-integration leadership role in their schools and reported that, in some cases, these uninvolved school librarians perceived that leadership in the area of technology integration wasn't part of their job. Additionally, school librarians were found to be resistant to accepting leadership roles outside of their schools and to sharing knowledge at conferences and with peers. In Johnston's (2012) research she identified many barriers to enacting leadership roles, including the resistance encountered from building-level instructional-technology specialists, and from unsupportive teachers and administrators. Finally, Kang (2015) found that school librarians displayed apathy and a resistance to change when it came to the implementation of digital textbooks, even though mandated use of the digital textbooks was soon to be required. The studies highlighted the fact that even if school librarians may possess a leadership skill set, leadership may or may not be enacted for various reasons.

Growth. Growth refers to a positive change, often over a period of time; a process of growing or development (Merriam-Webster n.d.-c). Several factors significant in fostering growth, defined here as the leadership development of the school librarian, emerged during the synthesis of the research. In examining the needs of school librarians, Everhart and Dresang (2007) found formal education and mentors important for school librarians' professional development and growth. Smith's findings echoed the importance of formal leadership training for leadership growth (2009), as did the findings from Johnston, who again noted the importance of formal education processes. Yet, Johnston (2012) also found that informal training, and self-education and initiative were important for growth, as were support from teachers, administrators, and peer school librarians.

Relationships. Relationship is defined as “the way in which two or more people...are connected with or involved with each other” and “the way in which two or more people...behave toward...each other” (Macmillan n.d.). We define the concept of relationships as applied to school librarian leadership as the associations and dealings with others both inside and outside the school. The significance and positive impact relationships with other school librarians can have were noted several times in several contexts, including as mentors (Everhart and Dresang 2007) and as critical friends and co-learners (Johnston 2012). A variety of other relationships, having both positive and negative impact on school librarians' ability to be education leaders, emerged in the studies. These relationships included those with teachers, administrators, instructional-technology specialists, and district coordinators (Everhart, Mardis, and Johnston 2011; Mardis and Everhart 2014; Johnston 2012).

Communication. Communication is defined as “the act or process of using words, sounds, signs, or behaviors to express or exchange information or to express your ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc., to someone else” (Merriam Webster n.d.-a). For the purposes of defining communication as a concept, the focus is on the sharing with others information and ideas in a variety of formats. Effective leaders communicate. To achieve their leadership potential, school librarian leaders must be able to successfully communicate and share their ideas with students,

technology coordinators, teachers, and administrators (Mardis and Everhart 2015; Everhart, Mardis, and Johnston 2011; Johnston 2012; Smith 2009). School librarian leaders also must share their expertise outside of their school buildings. This sharing can take the form of teaching or engaging in advocacy. The importance of this sharing with other school librarians and educators at the district level and with a broader audience, such as conference attendees, is interwoven throughout the studies as being a significant part of leadership.

Confidence. Confidence is defined as a “(a) a feeling or belief that you can do something well or succeed at something; (b) a feeling or belief that someone or something is good or has the ability to succeed at something” (Merriam-Webster n.d.-b) As a concept emerging in this study, confidence is defined as “a feeling of self-assurance arising from one’s appreciation of one’s own abilities or qualities” (Oxford 2016). Confidence was found to be a very important concept for school librarian leadership, including confidence in teaching abilities, leadership abilities, and technology abilities.

Confidence supports communication and relationships. If a school librarian exudes confidence, that librarian is more likely to communicate effectively and to establish and nurture successful relationships. Confidence was also associated with risk-taking, an essential component of leadership (Smith 2009). Without the foundation of confidence a school librarian will not even attempt to take on leadership roles (Mardis and Everhart 2015; Everhart, Mardis, and Johnston 2011; Johnston 2012; Smith 2009) and it is unlikely that librarians who lack confidence will be able to influence and inspire others as described in the definition of school librarian leadership. Without the foundation of confidence a school librarian will not even attempt to take on leadership roles (Everhart and Mardis 2015; Everhart, Mardis, and Johnston 2011; Johnston 2012; Smith 2009), and it is unlikely that they will be able to influence and inspire others per the definition.

Propositions

While concepts are the basic units of theory development, theories require an understanding of the relationships among concepts. Propositions are statements expressing logical relationships among concepts (Lynham 2000). At the core of school librarian leadership are the concepts of confidence, communication, and relationships. Understanding that these concepts are not mutually exclusive and can evolve over time is essential to this model. Theory-building research uses the literature as a guideline to decide which relationships are important for investigation. Meta-ethnography provided a method for second- and third-order interpretations from the reports analyzed; these interpretations led to the resulting propositions and the conceptual model (figure 2), which visually demonstrates these relationships. The relationships we see as most significant are described below.

Our visual representation of school librarian leadership is placed on the axis of “growth and resistance.” Why did we choose this axis? Our meta-ethnographic analysis indicated that that leadership is grown via factors such as personal exploration, dedication to professionalism, participation in professional organizations, taking advantage of library education, and developing technology expertise. Yet, there are also factors that provide resistance to school librarian leadership. A school librarian may work in a school culture where the librarian’s efforts to be a leader are impaired by an uncooperative technology coordinator and by teachers and administrators who do not recognize the librarian as a leader. As a result of such barriers, school

librarians cannot share their knowledge and support the best learning environment for their students.

Resistance also comes from within, as school librarians make conscious decisions not to take on leadership roles that have been defined for them by professional organizations or to extend their reach beyond their own school building, whether it be in the community or as a leader among peers, preferring a more-traditional approach.

Essential to our framework shown in figure 2 is recognizing that the many factors and influences affecting school librarian leadership are not mutually exclusive or developed in isolation. The concepts are interrelated, and a school librarian's ability and willingness to enact a leadership role can evolve over time. School librarians can build their confidence, develop more-effective communication skills, and step out of their comfort zones. School dynamics and personnel can also change and—by means of either fostering growth or building resistance—influence the degree to which leadership can be enacted.

Proposition 1: Education can provide a leadership skill set to bolster confidence for the growth of school librarian leadership.

School library preparation programs can provide instruction on the knowledge, skills, and abilities school librarians need to develop leadership (Everhart and Dresang 2007; Everhart, Mardis, and Johnston 2011; Johnston 2012; Mardis and Everhart 2014; Smith 2009). Confidence is shown in the growth area of the model in figure 2 because confidence can also grow in school librarians as a result of personal exploration, personal dedication, participation in professional organizations, cultivating relationships with peers, and developing technology expertise.

School librarians perceive that their education that equipped them with leadership skills—such as collaborating and communicating effectively, and team building—facilitated the development of leadership behaviors, and “they were confident that they could create positive impacts on their schools because of the leadership skills they learned” (Smith 2009, 62).

Confidence with technology as a way to enable leadership was a resounding theme. As new innovations, beyond technology, are introduced to schools, being in the forefront of modeling innovations' value to students is a sound strategy. Technology skills and expertise can be developed through formal education, such as school librarian preparation programs, and with this expertise comes confidence. The development of new technology skills can give school librarians the confidence and knowledge to enable them to be fully involved in leadership roles and build their capacity for leading in the integration of technology for learning (Mardis and Everhart 2014; Johnston 2012; Smith 2009).

School librarian preparation programs can create confident school librarians who have the technology knowledge and the leadership skills to enact the expected leadership role in their school. However, it is not only initial school library preparation education programs that contribute to this confidence and leadership growth. School librarians also cite professional development training and informal modes of education as factors that can contribute to leadership growth (Everhart, Mardis, and Johnston 2011; Johnston 2012).

Proposition 2: School librarian leadership growth is influenced by school culture.

Education is replete with formal and informal structures that either support or constrain leadership. School culture can be defined as the guiding beliefs, assumptions, and expectations that are evident in the way the school operates (Fullan and Hargreaves 1996). Despite the leadership skill set that school librarians build in library education programs (Everhart and Dresang 2007; Smith 2009), they may encounter real-world obstacles once they are on the job (Johnston 2012).

Institutional challenges of study subjects' individual school environments encompassed lack of support for taking on leadership roles, being excluded from decision making, and uncollaborative teachers or instructional-technology specialists. Eager first-year school librarians also came up against resistance related to group dynamics and encountered teacher colleagues who were unwilling to view a former teacher peer in a new leadership role as a school librarian (Mardis and Everhart 2014).

Although school culture was most often associated with resistance, Johnston (2012) identified the existence of a district-wide school library coordinator, a supportive principal who provided opportunities for leadership, formal professional development, and a flexible schedule as school culture factors that enabled school librarians in their leadership efforts. School librarians most frequently noted the importance of various opportunities for taking an authentic leadership role, such as serving on committees and providing professional development for other faculty and staff (Johnston 2012). Research indicates that effective collaborative school cultures involve others in decision making and provide opportunities for leadership, and very often this culture is driven by a supportive and facilitative principal; therefore, the importance of the school principal on school culture must be acknowledged (Katzenmeyer and Moeller 2009; Spillane 2006).

Proposition 3: Peers contribute to school librarian leadership growth.

Because school librarianship is a unique and solitary position, it is not surprising that the school librarians in each of the studies examined felt that relationships and communication with other school librarians aided in their leadership development. Study participants valued relevant perspectives obtained from their peers via online forums (Everhart and Dresang 2007), at professional conferences (Johnston 2012), and through small-group collaborations during large-scale technology initiatives (Kang 2015). Professors' input and peer support was also important for first-year school librarians (Mardis and Everhart 2014).

Connecting with peers has many benefits. It can be used to reduce isolation and allow school librarians to develop and hone their skills through learning with and from their network of peers who provide support, feedback, insight, and information. Mentors, district-wide school librarian groups, professional organizations, and online personal learning networks were all ways that school librarians in these studies describe a supportive relationship with respected colleagues.

Proposition 4: School librarian leadership growth requires a specific mind-set.

School librarians will not or cannot lead without a leadership mind-set or a desire to lead. This leadership "way of thinking" can be introduced and acquired in library education (Everhart and Dresang 2007; Smith 2009), and can later be solidified through involvement in professional associations (Johnston 2012) and through success in practice (Johnston 2012; Mardis and

Everhart 2014). But the desire to lead and commitment to professional growth and to making a difference must be present first (Johnston 2012).

These findings are supported by leadership trait theory, which asserts that core personal characteristics such as cognitive abilities, personality, values, social appraisal, problem-solving skills, and expertise (Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader 2004) exist in leaders. Kok-Yee Ng, Soon Ang, and Kim Yin Chan (2008) proposed a moderated framework for the Zaccaro et al. model. The Ng, Ang, and Chan model is known as leadership self-efficacy (LSE), which is a leader's self-perceived capabilities to perform leader roles, taking into consideration the moderating role of job demands and job autonomy. LSE directly applies to the school librarian leadership concepts extracted from the examined studies.

The six studies examined also emphasized that when the mind-set necessary for leadership did not exist, school librarians were resistant to many of the leadership roles prescribed in national guidelines for school librarians (AASL 2009). In some study participants, resistance was so strong that they stated these roles were "not my job" (Everhart, Mardis, and Johnston 2011). Rather than be at the forefront of an impending state or national education initiative, some school librarians would rather avoid these initiatives and, as a result, lose key leadership opportunities (Kang 2015). The results of the studies we examined indicated that technology expertise can be a catalyst for developing the mind-set needed for leadership (Smith 2009; Everhart, Mardis, and Johnston 2011; Johnston 2012; Mardis and Everhart 2014) but that self-imposed education and being an early adopter of innovations are needed to sustain it (Johnston 2012; Kang 2015).

Proposition 5: School librarian leadership engagement follows traditional leadership patterns and is resistant to forms of leadership that require taking risks.

The studies examined were permeated with forms of leadership that encourage risk taking and stepping out of one's comfort zone as opposed to more traditional types of leadership such as leading through modeling and from the middle with the teachers in one's own building. Smith's (2009) study of transformational leadership behaviors of pre-service school librarians revealed that they felt more comfortable Modeling the Way and Enabling Others to Act than they did Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, and Encouraging the Heart (Kouzes and Posner 2007). Risk-taking, an essential component of leadership, was a challenge. This narrow view of leadership extended along the continuum of a school librarian's career. The majority of school librarians Smith studied were unwilling to go beyond any type of traditional leadership activities outside their own school walls. Leadership in the community and in professional associations was not prevalent. Some of the more far-reaching and impactful behaviors possible for school librarians, such as setting learning objectives for collaborative lessons and presenting at conferences, were unrealized (Everhart, Mardis, and Johnston 2011).

School librarians in these studies noted a lack of confidence and school culture, barriers that may have led to their resistance to engaging in riskier forms of leadership.

Communication emanating from principals and other education authorities when these studies were conducted may also have been a factor in minimal risk-taking. At that time, there was, and continues to be, an intense emphasis on high-stakes testing and deviating from this emphasis is not rewarded. Additionally, school librarian jobs were vulnerable due to the recession. It has been posited (Smith 2009) that this atmosphere in the schools inhibits risk-taking. These findings contribute to the proposition that a continuum of school librarian leadership engagement exists

and that school librarians make conscious decisions about levels and styles of leadership that are influenced by a variety of factors.

Conclusions and Future Research

The purpose of a theory is to “explain the meaning, nature, and challenges of a phenomenon, often experienced but unexplained in the world in which we live, so that we may use that knowledge and understanding to act in more informed and effective ways” (Lynham 2002, 222). While in the past decade the body of research in the area of school librarian leadership had developed significantly, there had not yet been an attempt to examine this research systematically. It was necessary to examine a subset of this research as a whole to identify key concepts, interpret them, and illuminate the relationships between them in a way that would provide the meaning that is needed. This meta-ethnographic approach provided a method for synthesizing published findings for the purpose of conceptualizing school librarian leadership.

The output for this first phase of theory building is a research-informed conceptual model (Lynham 2002). Although a conceptual model has its limitations, such as the fact that different researchers may have different conceptions of the same phenomenon and may create different conceptual models based on the same evidence, a conceptual model also offers some important advantages (Jabareen 2009). Our model is based on flexible conceptual terms rather than rigid theoretical variables and causal relations, and can, therefore, be modified with the evolution of school librarian leadership or as a result of new research. This conceptual model aims to help educators understand the phenomenon of school librarian leadership rather than to predict it.

In the next phase of theory building, the proposed model, concepts, and propositions need to be confirmed and/or tested in real-world contexts. We propose this conceptual model as a starting point and believe that this model and the propositions emerging from it provide an agenda for future research. Therefore, to contribute to further developing a theory of school librarian leadership to inform and improve practice, future research investigating and testing the propositions in the real-world context of school librarianship is planned.

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Cite This Article

Everhart, Nancy, and Melissa P. Johnston. "A Proposed Theory of School Librarian Leadership: A Meta-Ethnographic Approach." <<http://www.ala.org/aasl/slr/volume19/everhart-johnston>>



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