NOVICE TEACHERS AND MENTORING

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

The three articles written in this dissertation discuss novice teachers and their mentoring experiences. The State of Texas requires that every new teacher, with less than two years of teaching experience, must be assigned a mentor by the district or campus, in the same subject, and ideally with the same planning periods. All too often, novice teachers must contend with being alone and unsupported their first year of teaching. For some new teachers, it seems as if they are thrust into an authority position for which they have not been sufficiently prepared. Teachers, novice or otherwise, need to be in a supportive and nurturing environment if they are to thrive and flourish. The purpose of this dissertation study was to examine the experiences of novice teachers and their mentors to decide if mentoring programs benefit beginner teachers and reduce novice teacher attrition in Texas public schools. The first article, "The Accidental Mentor," is autobiographical in nature, and chronicles my experiences over the last twenty-one years with being mentored by others and my personal development into a mentor to others. The second article, "Mentoring and Teacher Induction: Imparting Pearls of Wisdom" focuses on the mentoring experiences of Helen and J.D. in Craig, You, and Oh's (2017) article "Pedagogy Through the Pearl Metaphor: Teaching as a Process of Ongoing Refinement" and my response to Helen's and J.D.'s interactions and practices. The third article, "Mentoring and Novice Teachers: Teachers' Perceptions at a Local High School in Central Texas" revolves around the mentoring experiences of eight teachers at a high school and my experiences mentoring a novice teacher. These three

articles represent the last 20 years of my career in public school as I unpack teaching

experiences by reading my personal journals, journal articles and interviewing other

teachers about their mentoring experiences. These experiences, for better or for worse,

have made me the teacher and mentor that I am today.

DEDICATION

To Dr. Cheryl J. Craig

Thank you so much for your help and guidance. I do not think I will ever be able to express the level of gratitude that I feel. You have been an inspiration, and without your generosity of spirit and kindness, I do not think I could have finished.

To Mom and Dad

Wow! Where do I begin? I honestly do not think I could have done this without your support and love. Thank you so much for all of your sacrifices and encouragement.

To Letson

Be a beacon?

To Wyatt and Morgan

Thank you for being so understanding and patient with me these last four years. I love you both so much.

To Matthew James Etchells

Thank you so much for all of your time and help over the last few years. I do not think I would have finished without your intervention. You have been an inspiration in perseverance and grace. You will most likely never read this. Etc. Etc.

To everyone on Highway 6 to and from College Station, Texas.

If I just passed you on the right, you are in the wrong lane.

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I am extremely grateful to my parents, husband and children. Where do I begin? I honestly do not think I could have done this without your support and love. Thank you so much for all of your sacrifices, understanding, and encouragement.

Finally, to my colleague and friend, Matthew J. Etchells. You know that I am not a very sentimental person, but knowing you has changed my life. Thank you so much for being the person I needed the most when it counted. Had it not been for your intervention, my doctoral journey would have abruptly ended. Your friendship, advice and guidance has been invaluable, and much appreciated. I am hoping that we continue to do great things together. Now get back to work.

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Contributors

This work was supervised by a dissertation committee consisting of Dr. Cheryl J. Craig (Chair), Dr. Radhika Viruru, Dr. Sharon Matthews, and Dr. Sara Raven of the Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture and Dr. Yolanda Padron from the Department of Educational Psychology.

All other work conducted for the dissertation was completed by the student independently.

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NOMENCLATURE

AEIS   Academic Excellence Indicator System

AP   Advanced Placement

ELA   English/Language Arts

ESSA   Every Student Succeeds Act

ESL   English as a Second Language

HOTS   Higher Order Thinking Skills

ISS   In School Suspension

NCLB   No Child Left Behind

STAAR   State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness

TAPR   Texas Academic Performance Report

TAKS   Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

TEKS   Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sweet are the uses of adversity which,

Like the toad, ugly and venomous,

Wears yet a precious jewel in his head

(Shakespeare, 1973, 2.1, 12-14).

Though she be but little, she is fierce

(Shakespeare, 1973, 3.2, 335).

There is no darkness but ignorance

(Shakespeare, 1973, 4.2, 43).

1.1. The Beginning of the End

This is the end. Well, not precisely the end, but at least the end of this chapter in my life. This journey is nearly complete, but the learning from it will never be over. This chapter began when I first became a teacher. It seems like I have always been a teacher in some fashion. As a child, I enjoyed "teaching" my younger brother and his playmates to read and write "in school." My mother was a first- and second-grade teacher and I modeled my teaching persona from hers. I sat in a chair and read aloud to my "students" who sat on the floor in front of me on the carpet, graded their papers with red makers, and put shiny smiley face stickers on the assignments that received 100s; just like my mother. My first real teaching job came about when I was 12 years old.

After living most of my life internationally, (my father worked in finance for a very large oil company) my family moved back to Oklahoma in the mid-1980s. In an effort to "keep up with the Jones,'" my father installed an in-ground swimming pool in our oversized backyard. I had been on a competitive swimming team while living in Bahrain, and my parents decided that I needed a summer job and could teach swimming lessons in our backyard pool. I was able to build up a small clientele from the children of my parent's friends and was able to teach swimming lessons well into September and then pick up again in mid-March. I taught swimming lessons in my backyard until I was 16 years old and then taught swimming lessons at the local community pool until I graduated from high school. As a freshman, sophomore, and junior in college, I taught gymnastics and swimming lessons at the YMCA. My family moved to the Houston, Texas area in the spring of 1992, and I soon followed in the fall. I attended a local university and when I graduated with a degree in English and a minor in Spanish (and not much else) I decided that my natural career path was that of a teacher. My father had always told me to find something that I was good at, and to stick to it. Teaching was "it."

I did not receive my teaching certificate through the prescribed method of a university-based teacher preparation program, but instead, I received my credentials through an alternative teaching certification program in Houston, Texas. Through this program, I was only required to have a college degree and to have a willingness to teach in under-served communities. My certification options were elementary Science, elementary and secondary Mathematics, or K-12 English as a Second Language (ESL).

As I was one class short of having 18 hours in biology, I was unable to choose the science certification. Mathematics was completely out of the question. But I did have a degree in English with a minor in Spanish, so ESL seemed like the perfect fit.

My own induction years were particularly difficult as mentors were generally assigned to me and were not invited to be mentors in the first place. This seemed to cause resentment on the part of the mentor towards me, which resulted in a less than favorable mentee/mentor situation. Lacking mentor support, I always felt like I was left behind, scrambling to catch up to the other teachers. Most often I did not feel supported or even, in some cases, liked by my colleagues or the administrators on my campus. When I decided to leave my school placements, it was not because I had issues with students or parents, but because I did not feel included or respected by my peers.

I knew almost nothing my first year of teaching, and my alternative certification program was, in essence, a summer six-week crash course in the basics of teacher preparation before beginning a teaching position in the fall. I had one day of lesson planning, a day of safety procedures, another day of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and one day of learning how to restrain violent students. The other days were filled with quick-fire pedagogy and interviews with area school districts. I finally received a position at a magnet school for Mathematics, Science and Fine Arts, teaching fourth grade ESL—just two weeks before school began.

I remember writing in my journal about how confused and afraid I was about not getting very much in the way of help from my mentor or anyone else.

I was given a mentor, but I'm not really sure if she has time for me. She keeps

saying that I will figure it out, but I don't know what "it" is. They just told me

that I have lesson plans due at the end of the week, and I think I give them to

Shelly (pseudonym). My room is in the portables and the ladies out there don't

seem to have time for me either. How am I supposed to do this?!?! (Personal

Journal entry August 28, 1997)

To say the least, my first year of teaching was one of the most stressful events in my

entire life. I eventually found a mentor in the woman who taught across the hall from

me—Janine (pseudonym). One day when Janine finally had enough of my classes being

loud, she came over to instruct me in classroom management. At that point, she began

to feel sorry for me, I think, because Janine then began to offer advice on lesson

planning for my ESL students. I realized at the time that the first year was going to be a

bumpy ride, and having nowhere else to turn, I immediately latched on to Janine and

held on for dear life.

I have been teaching now for roughly 22 years. Half of that time was spent in

public K-12 schools, and I have been a "new" teacher on many occasions. Every time

that I changed grade levels, schools, or districts, I became a new teacher all over again. I

had to learn a new curriculum and adjust my teaching style to fit each new grade and

each new school, but because I had been teaching for several years, the transition

became less difficult. Early on in my elementary teaching career, I began "cycling up"

with my students, meaning that one year I would teach fourth grade and the next year I

would teach fifth grade, moving up with the group of students. Then I would go back to

teaching fourth grade and move up with my students again. Most often I was given the majority of the same students from the previous year, so this meant that I only had to learn new curriculum. Every other year I would start with a new batch of students, and once I had learned the fourth- and fifth-grade curriculum, teaching became easier, taking several years for me to master.

1.1.1. Teacher Stories

As a teacher, I am quite used to telling stories, but I have not necessarily unpacked them to glean overarching meaning from them. I am also interested in other people's stories as sources of insight and instruction. I have learned that there is a difference between hearing someone and listening to someone, and once a person feels like they are being listened to, then you can build a rapport with them, which is foundational in the dyad relationship of mentor-mentees. This is how I built relationships with my students, of which many came from tough home situations and often needed someone to talk to who would listen and not judge them. Once I had established a rapport with my students, they felt free to tell me about their challenges. I sometimes feel that I am more of a therapist to my students than their teacher. I am coming to know more about this as narratives of practice are shared by teachers, researchers, counselors, and therapists, among many others (including parents and the ministry). This skill seemed to extend to my contemporaries as well, and I soon became a person that my teacher friends leaned upon for support and advice. In short, I became a mentor to others.

In my experience, the 'ever-changing' landscape of teaching became one of the hallmarks of teacher stress which can lead to teacher attrition. Ingersoll (2001), Darling-Hammond (2000), and Huberman (1993) assert that new teachers are particularly vulnerable to high levels of stress which often leads to their resignation within the first five years of teaching. If I had not sought out mentors to help me during my first year of teaching, I do not think that I would still be a teacher today. Having to find my own mentors and resources has shaped who I am as a teacher and as a mentor. Considering the influences that positive relationships with my early mentors had and continue to have on my sustained teaching career was the provocation for examining how my experiences with mentors and mentoring might give insights into the impact of mentoring on novice teacher beginning experiences and sustainability.

1.1.2. Beginning Teachers Matter

While there does not seem to be an issue with finding and hiring new teachers, as many of the teacher preparation programs are at capacity, the problem arises when new teachers decide to leave the profession or transfer to another school district. This can cause problems for districts as they can expend between $10,000 to $20,000 training and preparing new teachers to work in their districts (Papay et al., 2017). Ingersoll, Merrill, and Stuckey (2014) point out that the teaching force is not decreasing but increasing and getting older. It is essential that school districts are able to hire and retain new teachers as the more experienced teachers retire. There has been an influx of new teachers in recent years, and while new teachers can bring a wealth of new ideas to their schools,

they still lack the training in content areas and classroom management that veteran teachers possess.

According to Hong (2012), new teachers need several years to perfect their craft (p. 418). Hong also cites resilience, self-efficacy, and perseverance as character traits that successful long-term teachers possess. New teachers, whether they are new to the content, campus, grade level, or teaching in general, are essential resources for schools. They bring a wealth of new knowledge and ideas to other teachers in their departments. It is also presumed that new teachers who have just graduated college have a closer connection to their students as they are more in touch with current trends in the media and technology.

1.1.3. Teacher Mentoring and Attrition

Various researchers (Darling-Hammond, 2003, 2010, 2017; Ingersoll, 2014; Papay et al., 2017; Redding & Henry, 2019) have reported an increase of novice teacher attrition over the last decade. Indeed, many of these new teachers leave their schools before the end of the school year and 40-50% leave before reaching their fifth year, and that number increases to a 75% turnover rate in urban and rural schools with a large number of minorities (Ingersoll & Perda, 2012). This cost alone, according to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF, 2007), reaches well over $7 billion per year for "recruitment, administrative processing and hiring, and professional development and training of replacement teachers" (Able et al., 2018, p. 203). To that end, it is imperative that novice teachers have an effective support system

in place before they begin teaching to help them with the everyday challenges they will face (Desimone et al., 2014).

In the state of Texas, all new teachers with two years or less experience, must have a mentor teacher assigned to them by the campus or district. This mentor teacher must have a least "three years of experience and a superior history of improving student performance and have completed a research-based mentor and induction training program approved by the commissioner" (Texas Education Code, §21.458). The code also recommends that the novice teacher and the mentor teach in the same school and teach the same subject or grade level, however, in actuality, this may not always be the case. While my mentors were on the same campus, they neither taught the same subject nor the same grade level. My last mentee taught English II Honors classes while I taught on level English III and IV. Again, we were on the same campus, and while we both taught "English," we did not teach the same grade level. To the untrained eye, one might think, "Well, English is English, right?" But that assumption would be incorrect. The distinction lies in the types of literature used in each class and the types of assignments given to students. Honors students are not just given more to do; their assignments must reflect the use of higher order thinking skills (HOTS) that incorporate Bloom's (1956) analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information. Creating these types of assignments for advanced students requires a certain nuance that cannot be learned altogether by one's self. Most importantly, these assignments cannot be seen by parents or students as "busy work." A mentor teacher would need to have several planning sessions with a mentee to review each step. Indeed, this can and does become

a full-time job for a mentor. This point is discussed further in my third article as to why many veteran teachers are unwilling to become mentors.

Teacher attrition and migration pose not only staffing problems in schools, but financial issues as well. "This turnover impacts schools financially through the administrative costs and time required for the hiring and training of new teachers, as well as the sunk cost of investing in teachers who do not remain in the field" (Ryan et al., 2017, p.3). Cynthia Kopkowski (2008) wrote in her article, *Why They Leave*,

> Nationally, the average turnover for all teachers is 17 percent, and in urban school districts specifically, the number jumps to 20 percent, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future proffers starker numbers, estimating that one-third of all new teachers leave after three years, and 46 percent are gone within five years. (p. 21)

Ryan et al. (2017) discuss the role of teacher stress in the age of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) in which the state and national testing of students determines the effectiveness of schools and teachers. This stress leads to teacher burnout and ultimately teacher turnover. The effects of teacher attrition can be widely felt throughout schools and the school districts with high turnover. Ryan et al. (2017) estimated the cost of training a new teacher to "be as high as $17, 682 per teacher" and the loss of such a resource can disrupt the climate of the school and impair the "consistency of classroom instruction (p. 3)". New teachers are particularly vulnerable to high levels of stress which often lead to their resignation

within the first five years of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Huberman, 1993; Ingersoll, 2001). However, studies show that new teachers are not necessarily leaving the profession, but rather migrating to other schools and that experienced teachers are more likely to migrate to another school rather than resign as well (Ryan et al., 2017). Ryan et al. (2017) found in their study that there was an "important link between high-stakes testing, accountability policies, and teacher attrition and that test based accountability significantly predicted stress, attrition, and burnout" (p.8). Not only did the researchers find a correlation between stress and teacher attrition, but the attrition was most likely in the form of a teacher changing campus' rather than quitting the profession. They found that campus climate was also an indicator of whether or not teachers stayed or resigned. Positive campus environments may deter teachers from leaving and "may be an important mediation of the relationship between accountability pressures, stress, and attrition and migration of teachers" (p.4).

Teachers in public schools have extensive workloads in addition to teaching 25 or more students per class. With the initiation of No Child Left Behind (2002) standardized testing and benchmarking have become a way of life for many teachers in the U.S. The pressure of constant testing, teacher evaluation, lack of control over curriculum, issues with students and parents, and administrative pressure to have students do well on standardized testing has caused many teachers to look for outlets to manage their stress or to quit the profession entirely (Ingersoll, 1997). Teacher burnout has also become a topic of interest over the last 30 years throughout the education community of scholars. Zysberg, Orenshtein, Gimmon and Robinson (2017) discuss the

symptoms and indicators of burnout, explaining, "Burnout is a multilevel response syndrome associated with prolonged exposure to stress and characterized by physical and psychological exhaustion, cynicism (as an interpersonal and emotional indication of built-up aggression), and a sense of helplessness and low self-efficacy" (p.123). The authors suggest that these symptoms can lead to anxiety, depression, diminished job performance, and can cause absenteeism. Furthermore, they propose "personality traits" as one of the factors that might influence how a person copes with stress. Similarly, Travers and Cooper (1996) assert that individuals with "Type A" personality traits manage stress symptoms quite differently than individuals with "Type B" personality traits.   The NASUWT teachers' union in England found that in a survey of 5,098 teachers, 22% had admitted to drinking alcohol to cope with work-related stress and nearly half had seen a doctor for health problems related to work. At least 10% of the sample had gone to their doctor for anti-depression medication and 7% had increased their use of their prescription medication (Stressed Teachers, 2016). Indeed, some research (Gold, 1995) suggests that that we are, in fact, stressing teachers out even before they begin their first year of teaching. Gold (1995) attributes teacher attrition before retirement to "poor public opinion regarding education, tight budget constraints, staff reduction, dealing with disruptive behavior, students' lack of interest in their work, new programs, accountability testing, and excessive paperwork" (p.255). She calls for more systematic research to be conducted on the burnout phenomenon and the underlying feelings that "lead to burnout during student teaching" (p.257).

Pearman and LeFever-Davis (2012) discuss the roots of the attrition dilemma in their article in which they echo Darling-Hammond (2003) and Anhorn (2008) in saying that there is evidence that indicates that teachers who lack adequate initial preparation are more likely to leave the profession. Their study investigates the idea that teacher attrition may very well begin in pre-service teacher education programs. Indeed, Anhorn (2008) describes the experiences of new teachers as "overwhelming, hectic, beaten down, unsupported, humiliated, afraid, stressed, and drowning" (p.15) in her study. One of her participants states the lack of administrative support as a reason that she was leaving the school and teaching altogether.

Pearman and LeFever-Davis (2012) used journal entries from 12 of their teacher candidates who were enrolled in a methods course that required 20 hours of field experience in Title I schools. What they discovered was that pre-service teachers became increasingly anxious about teaching the closer time came for them to enter the teaching field. As one pre-service teacher shared, "I don't want to teach anymore but my parents will kill me if I change majors" (p. 8). Other students wondered how teachers put up with the behavior of the students and that the teachers looked "so worn down" (p.8). Another pre-service teacher seemed to ask the professors in her journal entry what else she could use her education courses for.

Linda Gagen and Sandra Bowie (2005) outline the need to train mentor teachers to help with novice teacher induction citing high levels of stress from tight schedules, classroom management, learning new content, learning new technology, and standardized testing. "Mentors who are effectively trained and have experience in the

school can help with this transition" (p.40). Mentor teachers are familiar with the school climate and can help novice teachers navigate the often overwhelming first year of teaching by providing support. This support can take the form of a shoulder to cry on, a kind voice, or words of encouragement to the novice teacher. "Mentors need to be advocates, collaborators, problem solvers, and strategists on behalf of both themselves and the novice teachers" (p. 41). Gagen and Bowie explain that mentor teachers should ideally be experienced teachers that share common subject matter with the novice teacher. However, they do not specify the number of years the "experienced" teacher must have to be a mentor. They support the training of mentor teachers and note that many school districts do not require training or provide training for these teachers, citing that most districts believe that the teacher's "experience" should be adequate training to be a mentor. "Even though mentors may be very experienced teachers, they need skills in many areas that may require training" (p.42). The authors point out that some of the issues between the mentor teachers and novice teachers may stem from the miscommunication due to the change in terminology associated with the teaching profession. Examples of commonly confused terms are "student teacher" being changed to "teacher candidate," "cooperating teacher" being changed to "clinical faculty" and "teaching methods" being changed to "instructional strategies."

Gagen and Bowie (2005) recommend that school districts offer mentor training workshops for teachers who have been chosen or volunteered to be mentors. This program should include topics on understanding novice teacher issues such as "inability to self-discriminate between effective and ineffective teaching, management of

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multidimensional classroom environments, communication with parents, students, and colleagues, management of time and resources, and emotional and professional needs of the novice teacher" (p.44). They propose that the workshop be offered to all prospective mentor teachers before school begins and then to have follow-up sessions six weeks to two months after the beginning of the assignment. They agree that providing training to mentor teachers is one way of addressing the issues of retaining qualified teachers, "Successful novice teachers, backed up by effective mentors are more likely to remain in the profession, and will become potential mentors for the new professionals who come after them" (p.45). With this in mind, the need for mentor teachers becomes vital to the survival of novice teachers and future educators.

1.1.4. Methodology: Narrative Inquiry

The term *narrative inquiry* was first coined by Clandinin and Connelly in the 1990's in their article "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry". Clandinin and Connelly, (2000) discuss their interest in lived experiences, "our interest as researchers is lived experience—that is, in lives and how they are lived" (p. xxii), and that experience is the key term in these studies (p. 2). Furthermore, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) assert that Dewey believed that experience was both social and personal, and that "experiences grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences" (p.2). In their 1990 article Connelly and Clandinin assert that "narrative is a way of characterizing the phenomena of human experience and its study which is appropriate to many social science fields" (p.2). Simply put, narrative inquiry per Clandinin and Connelly (2000), "is stories lived and told" (p.20).

Throughout their book, *Narrative Inquiry* (2000)*,* Clandinin and Connelly

discuss the three-dimensional space of narrative inquiry. They describe three common

places—situational, social, temporal—at the intersection of which is located the space

where narrative inquiry research takes place. These are similar to Joseph Schwab's

(1973) description in *The Practical 3: Translation into Curriculum* article, of the four

common places of experience: subject matter, learner, teacher, and the milieu. In their

book *Narrative Inquiry* (2000) Clandinin and Connelly discuss their terms and spaces

about narrative inquiry as

> *Personal* and *social* (interaction); *past, present*, and *future* (continuity);
>
> combined with the notion of *place* (situation). This set of terms creates a
>
> metaphorical *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space,* with temporality along
>
> one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place
>
> along the third. (p. 50)

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) also assert the need for a "simultaneous exploration of all

three commonplaces" (p.479) for narrative inquiry to be effective. Temporality is

described as events and people always having a past, present, and a future and that it is

"important to always try to understand people, places, and events as in process, as

always in transition" (Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007, p.23). Connelly and Clandinin

(2006) emphasize that "Narrative inquirers are concerned with personal conditions and,

at the same time, with social conditions. By personal conditions we mean the feelings,

hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions" (p.480). By place, Connelly

and Clandinin (2006) mean the actual "physical and topological boundaries of place or

sequence of places where the inquiry and events take place" (p. 480). This description of the three-dimensional space fits with the interpretivist paradigm that Glesne (2011) describes as "a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing" (p.8). Clifford Geertz, a prominent anthropologist, writing extensively on change, asserted, "change in the world, change in the inquiry, change in the inquirer, change in the point of view, change in the outcomes" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.6). As I write this, I can feel myself moving, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe, forward and backward in time remembering how I felt as a novice teacher and how I dealt with trying to find someone to mentor me at the time. As I remember and write, inwardly I feel the anxiety rise up again in my chest and I have to remember that I have not been a novice teacher for over 20 years. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) discuss the term "broadening," in response to general overview questions like "What sort of person are you?" or "What kind of society is it?" (p.11). While Connelly and Clandinin state that sometimes these are interesting questions, they are not strictly narrative questions. This requires "burrowing," in essence, rooting out the emotions connected with events and why the subject has "these feelings and what their origins might be" (p.11). Connelly and Clandinin equate this process with Schafer's (1981) "narrative therapy". Finally, Connelly and Clandinin discuss "restorying" as a coming about as the

> Person returns to present and future considerations and asks what the meaning of the event is and how he or she might create a new story of self which changes the meaning of the event, its description, and its significance for the larger life story the person may be trying to live (p.11).

In that vein, I want to help new teachers stay in the profession and guide them through some of the difficulties that commonly arise during the first year of teaching that cause them to quit the profession or migrate to other schools.

Some people find it difficult to believe that one person could have so many misadventures in one teaching career. Some, in fact, are shocked about the abuse that I have endured and are equally shocked that I have stayed in education for this long. However, I feel like I am telling my truth and the truth of others in these narrative accounts and Connolly and Clandinin (1990) discuss this very idea in their studies.

> In our studies, we use the notions of adequacy (borrowed from Schwab, 1964) and plausibility. A plausible account is one that tends to ring true. It is an account of which one might say "I can see that happening." Thus, although fantasy may be an invitational element in fictional narrative, plausibility exerts firmer tugs in empirical narratives (p. 8).

1.1.5. Three Articles

The three articles included in this dissertation revolve around a central theme of novice teachers and the need for mentoring. Each article reflects my own personal experiences in the teaching field and details my struggles in finding someone to mentor me as a novice teacher. The first article, "The Accidental Mentor", explores the last twenty-two years of my teaching career, focusing on the interactions with my accidental mentors and mentees. As a beginning teacher, I was not afforded a mentor that was interested in mentoring me. I spent the first several years of my teaching career struggling to find someone willing to help me hone my craft as a teacher. More often

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than not, I was left to learn from my own mistakes. Later in my career, I realized that it was important for teachers to have someone to show them the way, no matter how many years of teaching they had. I came to understand that my own mentoring experiences have shaped who I am today as a teacher and mentor.

The second article, "Mentoring and Teacher Induction: Imparting Pearls of Wisdom", takes on a meta-level analysis of the mentor-mentee relationship and interactions between mentor Helen and mentee J. D. My personal experiences with mentors and mentoring are used as a point of comparison. In "Pedagogy Through the Pearl Metaphor: Teaching as a Process of Ongoing Refinement," Craig, You, and Oh (2017) recount the similar situation of novice teacher J. D. J.D. was an African-American preservice teacher at the time, who was previously a college varsity football player. Fortunately for J. D., veteran teacher Helen informally becomes his mentor even though J. D. has an assigned mentor. Through this unofficial pairing, Helen was able to guide J. D. through his first year of teaching by providing him "pearls" from her own teaching experience. The metaphor of the "strand of pearls" not only epitomizes the gathering of new knowledge for J. D., but also Helen's "pearls of wisdom" that she passes on to him. Helen and J. D. worked closely together throughout the year to develop lessons for the physical education classes they taught.

Finally, I discuss eight high school teachers' perceptions of mentoring and novice teaching in my third article, "Mentoring and Novice Teachers: Teachers' Perceptions at a Local High School in Texas". Despite many states requiring that beginning teachers have mentors, pairing mentors and mentees can often be difficult. In

some cases, the mentor and mentee have differing personalities, or the mentor may have been "assigned" to be a mentor without being asked. Regardless, each mentor/mentee relationship is unique. Article three uses narrative inquiry methods to explore the experiences of eight high school teachers in Central Texas as they relate to being mentored and mentoring others. Specifically, the inquiry examines the different types of mentors that the teachers had as novice teachers and how their relationship with their mentor influenced their decision to remain in the teaching field. Teacher participant experiences in mentoring others are also included in the paper.

1.1.6. Research Questions

It is important to understand the influence of mentors on novice teachers because, "Knowledge of informal mentoring is important for explaining the success or failure of induction policies because informal interactions occur within the context of a broad array of novice teacher induction supports" (Desimone et al, 2014, p.89). To that end, I discuss the following in each of the articles included in this dissertation.

1. To what extent does an informal/formal mentor influence a novice teacher to remain in the field? I explored the influences of my informal/formal mentor teachers in my first article, "The Accidental Mentor". In this article, I explore how formal and informal mentors have influenced my colleagues and the impact the mentoring has had on their teaching careers. I also discuss the informal mentoring techniques of Helen in article two and how she passes on her "pearls of wisdom" to her informal mentee, J.D.

2. Why do some veteran teachers decide to become mentors while others consider mentoring a burden? In the third article, I discuss some of the issues of becoming a

mentor teacher. Being a mentor teacher does require a great deal of time an effort, and many veteran teachers, while admitting that mentoring is important, refuse to volunteer for the job because of the extra work involved.

3.How can school systems alleviate some of the burden so that veteran teachers will be more willing to mentor a new teacher? Finally, I discuss ways that school districts and campuses can alleviate some of the extra workload so that veteran teachers will be more willing to formally mentor a novice teachers.

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2. THE ACCIDENTAL MENTOR

2.1. Introduction

Teachers leave the profession or change schools for a myriad of reasons ranging from poor working conditions to inadequate salary. Attrition among novice teachers, however, is particularly high. For example, Papay et al. (2017) found in their study across sixteen urban school districts in seven states that "within five years, 55% of novice teachers leave their district, and 70% leave their school" (p. 437). Consequently, hiring and retaining qualified teachers is a challenge for many school districts (Darling-Hammond, 2003, 2010, 2017). Teacher attrition and migration pose not only staffing problems in schools, but financial issues as well. "[High teacher] turnover impacts schools financially through the administrative costs and time required for the hiring and training of new teachers, as well as the sunk cost of investing in teachers who do not remain in the field" (Ryan et al., 2017, p. 3). This disturbing trend in teacher attrition has been researched for over forty years, yet no one can seem to pin down primary causes of teacher attrition, only that there are a number of situations that lead to teachers quitting, migrating, or retiring early.

Discussing the roots of the attrition dilemma, Pearman and LeFever-Davis (2012) assert that evidence indicates that teachers who lack adequate initial preparation are more likely to leave the profession early in their careers. Their study suggests that teacher attrition may very well begin in pre-service teacher education programs before potential teachers officially enter the profession. Furthermore, Gold (1985) claims that we are in fact stressing teachers out even before they begin their first year of teaching.

She attributes teacher attrition before retirement to "poor public opinion regarding education, tight budget constraints, staff reduction, dealing with disruptive behavior, students' lack of interest in their work, new programs, accountability testing, and excessive paperwork" (p. 255). Anhorn (2008) describes the experiences of new teachers as "overwhelming, hectic, beaten down, unsupported, humiliated, afraid, stressed, and drowning" (p. 15). One of Anhorn's (2008) participants asserted that the lack of administrative support was the reason that she was leaving the school and teaching altogether. Given such situations and challenges, it is important for novice teachers to have positive experiences and a nurturing school environment that encourage them to continue in the teaching field.

In my case, a mentor teacher was the difference between me staying a teacher or finding a new career. My initial mentors wanted nothing to do with me. Consequently, I was often left to figure out new curriculum and teaching strategies by myself with little to no help from anyone. Ultimately, I was left to find my own mentor and resources. Finding a mentor that was willing to give me feedback on my practice made all the difference between staying and leaving.

This narrative inquiry takes up an autobiographical exploration into the influence of mentors on my beginning teacher classroom experiences and on my decision to stay or leave teaching as a profession. Drawing on experiences over the span of a career, my stories of experience pertaining to being both a mentee and a mentor are examined.

2.1.1. Literature Review

Darling-Hammond (2010) asserts that "policies that can address the root problems of high turnover must address the four major factors that exert strong influences on teacher entry and retention: (a) salaries, (b) working conditions, (c) preparation, and (d) mentoring and support" (p. 5). Extensive research suggests that mentor teachers are an integral part of a novice teachers' induction into the field of education and essential for retaining teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010, 2017; Paula & Grīnfelde, 2018; Sparks et al., 2017;). Although new teachers face increasing challenges throughout their induction years of teaching (first five years), effective mentoring can help to alleviate some of the stress that these novice teachers will encounter.

In the age of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) in which the state and national testing of students determines the effectiveness of schools and teachers, stress plays an integral role in teacher attrition and retention. This stress leads to teacher burnout and ultimately teacher turnover. Inexperienced teachers, in particular, need support systems in place for them to be successful. Griffith, Steptoe, and Cropley (1999) discuss the relationship between workplace social support for teachers and the reduction of stressors which can lead to physical illness and increase the psychological well-being in those educators. We specifically scaffold the learning of new concepts for our students, why would we not do so for novice teachers? Smethem (2007) documents the experience of one novice

teacher, Ariane, whose induction year was a "disaster." She said that there was a lack of adequate support and her mentor teacher was not really trained:

> If I had been given the support … I would have improved my teaching more … When I was observed with them it was a bit late … something that could have been solved very quickly, just dragged on and on and on and on. (p. 473)

Schaefer, Long and Clandinin (2012) document several articles in which mentoring programs have been found to help with the attrition and migration of novice teachers, they found that "positive mentoring can help to alleviate beginning teacher burnout" (p. 109) with beginning special education teachers. Algozzine, Gretes, Queen, and Cowan-Hathcock (2007) conducted a study that utilized a cross-sectional instrument to survey third-year teachers who had participated in induction programs. They found that

> (a) mentoring by experienced teachers, (b) release time for observing (both same field and variant field), (c) common planning times, and (d)creating networks of new and experienced teachers was found to help support beginning teachers better cope with entry into the profession" (p. 111).

Mentoring and induction programs and administrative support were associated with higher rates of retention of beginning teachers (Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006 p. 111). Not only do they indicate the necessity of mentor teachers for the induction of novice teachers, but also the need for these mentors to be properly trained as well. However, just retaining teachers may not be enough. Schaefer, Long, and Clandinin (2012) discuss the need of sustaining novice teachers during their tenure in order to

retain them, "We suggest the need to shift the conversation from one focused only on retaining teachers toward a conversation about sustaining teachers throughout their careers" (p. 118).

Many novice teachers in the state of Texas are not afforded a mentor teacher during their second or third year of teaching which may lead to their quitting the profession or migrating to another more supportive environment. Kelchtermans (2017) argues that it is not necessarily a bad thing if teachers leave. He says that there are some advantages to ineffective teachers leaving schools, but the real problem lies when good teachers leave the job for the wrong reasons (p. 965). Indeed, if effective teachers are leaving their schools to get away from poor working conditions, that may constitute an actual loss for a school and district. I had to find mentors on my own throughout my teaching years to help me. Bressman, Winter, and Efron (2018) echo the same sentiment of Schaefer, Long, and Clandinin (2012) that mentoring is necessary throughout the teaching career which can help alleviate frustration, cynicism, and burnout.

2.1.2. Methodology

Experience, according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), is "the starting point and the key term for all social science inquiry" (p. xxiii). I have used Narrative Inquiry as a methodology for this study because as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state, "examining experience is the key to education" (p. xiii). As I continually unpack my 20 years of teaching experiences by reading my journals, and reading journal articles over mentoring, I realize that each experience I have had, for better or worse, has made me who I am today. Narrative inquiry allows me to burrow into my stories and the stories

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of others to find commonalities between myself and other teachers. I am analyzing the journal articles of dozens of researchers, including Craig (1997, 2013, 2017), Darling-Hammond (2003, 2010, 2017), Ingersoll (2003), Ingersoll, Merrill and Stuckey (2014), Izadinia (2015), and Kelchtermans (2017) among others. I am using these researcher reflective writings as my field texts, analyzing them for emergent themes, and identifying commonalities between my own experience and practice and the literature.

2.1.3. Findings: Personal Experiences of Mentors and Mentoring

I have been a teacher for the last twenty-one years. Thirteen of those years I have taught English/Language Arts and English as a Second Language in public K-12 education settings. Of those years, I have spent the last ten years at the junior college and university levels teaching pre-service teachers' Social Studies methods, and Human Growth and Learning.

I had not initially wanted to be a teacher. I had wanted to be a nurse or a veterinarian (or anything else but a teacher), but the mathematics proved to be too difficult a subject area for me, and I had to opt for the next best career choice: teaching. Please do not misunderstand me; teaching is a noble profession. Aside from the long hours and low pay, the profession itself can be gratifying. However, when I started teaching, what I naïvely expected teaching to be like and what teaching was actually like, were worlds apart.

As previously mentioned, a mentor teacher was the difference between me staying a teacher or finding a new career. However, my initial mentors wanted little or nothing to do with me. As a result, I was left to figure out new curriculum and teaching

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strategies by myself with little to no help from anyone. Equally important is that I was

challenged with finding my own mentors and my own resources as a beginning teachers.

The following two major sections present reflections on my teaching experiences as they

relate to interactions of being mentored and mentoring others: Years One Through Five

and Years Six Through Eleven.

2.1.3. Years One Through Five

Fortunately, or unfortunately, I did not come to teaching through the traditional

method. I opted for alternative certification through my local, regional education service

center. In 1997, when I began teaching, there was a limited number of teaching options

available to me through the regional education service center: K-12 English as a Second

Language (ESL), K-12 Bilingual, secondary Math, and secondary Science. The only

requirement was to have a college degree and at least eighteen college credit hours in the

subject one wanted to teach. My Bachelor's degree in English was useful after all. I

was required to observe different grade level teachers for thirty hours before entering the

alternative certification program. After that, I was required to take three graduate

courses at a private university in Houston, Texas. The best, or worst, part of all of this

was that I would be doing all of this while teaching full time in a school.

The summer before I started my first teaching position in a school district nine

miles north of Houston, Texas was spent taking crash courses in teaching from the

regional service center. I am sure that the courses covered many topics, but the only

thing I do remember from that particular class was how to restrain a violent student

appropriately. My first teaching assignment was 4th-grade English as a Second

Figure 1. Macon Academy (pseudonym)

Language at Macon (pseudonym) Academy, a magnet school for Mathematics, Science

and Fine Arts. The school was located in a historically African American community;

one of the last in America to settle its failure to desegregate properly. The neighborhood

was known as one of the most challenging in the Houston, Texas area and teachers were

encouraged to leave the school as soon as possible at the end of the day by the

administration and local police, but I routinely arrived a minimum of an hour before

school and stayed well past the time we were supposed to leave. It was one of the

largest unincorporated black communities in the South and was established around the

time of World War I. According to Kleiner (2010), this is the time when landowners

began selling off home sites that were large enough to allow gardens and small farm

animals. "The first settlers came from rural areas, attracted by the community's

inexpensive land, low taxes, and the absence of city building standards," (Kleiner, 2010,

p.1). However, the conditions in this neighborhood quickly declined, and while this

neighborhood was annexed by Houston in the late 1960's, rehabilitation efforts did not

start until the 1980s, and "by then the project was troubled by crime and drug abuse"

(Kleiner, 2010, p. 2).

My students would frequently regale me with stories of drug deals, drive-by shootings, and arrests on their neighborhood streets. These students were of mostly low socio-economic status (68.4%) and largely African American (45.7%) and increasingly Hispanic (34.8%) (AEIS Report: Macon (pseudonym) Academy, 1997). Some children were bussed in from surrounding neighborhoods, but for the most part, most of my students lived in the area. The English as a Second Language and Special Education classrooms were held in temporary buildings on the edge of the regular campus, and it was a little bit of a walk to my classroom, to say the least. I was assigned a mentor for my first year of teaching, and she made it very clear to me during our one and only meeting that she did not want to be my mentor and that our principal had made her my mentor without asking her first. I was left to my own devices for the rest of the time.

Craig (2013) details the first year of novice teacher, Anna Dean in, "Coming to know in the 'eye of the storm': A beginning teachers introduction to different versions of teacher community", which ostensibly is the most difficult year for a teacher, and in Anna's case seems to be so much worse. In this study, the principal of the Houston area T.P. Yeager Middle School had reorganized the Language Arts department into a Literacy department in which the teachers were responsible for the development of the student's literacy skills. This reorganization seemed to overwhelm the experienced teachers, not to mention Anna, who had never taught before. The principal has also hired a consultant that was to serve in an advisory capacity to the Language Arts department, and after attending a conference in Las Vegas about Professional Learning Communities, instituted them at his school. Anna's description of the climate of T.P.

Yeager was somewhat disturbing. The previous year, teachers had been let go and transferred to other schools for disagreeing with the literacy program, and the "Yaeger faculty began to 'walk on eggshells' because word was getting out that 'if you were not on board,' the administrative response could likely be 'we don't need you here anymore…'" (p. 31). Her mentor at the time, Miguel, who had disagreed with the way the teachers were being treated, left the school after Anna's first year. That year began Anna Dean's "story to live by" which eventually turned into her "story to leave by" as she left the school after six years to teach overseas.

I remember I spent my first semester just barely keeping my head above water and then I started asking questions. Questions like: Do I really want to be a teacher? Does this job get any easier? How does anyone do this job for twenty-five years? But mostly, why is everyone so reluctant to help a new teacher? It could have been the constant fluctuation of staff members in and out of the school each year (AEIS Report: Macon (pseudonym) Academy, 1996, 1997, 1998). I realized that I had no idea what I was doing and that I would need help if I wanted to thrive as a teacher. My mentor from Region IV Education Service Center came by to observe me once the first semester and once the second semester. She said I was doing "okay," and that it would get "easier the longer I taught," but I wondered how much easier it would get if I did not have someone at the school to guide me. One woman in my alternative certification cohort group quit teaching in October to go back to working for an airline. Her main complaint was that she did not feel supported by her administration and her mentor was nonexistent. It may have had something to do with the gaping hole in her urban school ceiling that leaked, or

it may have been that teaching kindergartners was not her ideal teaching position.

Regardless, it was a wakeup call for me, and it was not very long after that conversation

that I found a mentor at Macon Academy that agreed to help me with the challenges I

was facing. This mentor reluctantly took me under her wing and helped guide me

through the rest of my first year of teaching. I say reluctantly because new teachers did

not seem to stay around very long on that campus or in the district. I imagine that she

did not want to waste her expertise on someone who was not going to be at the school

the next year. Somehow, I convinced her that I was worth helping, or maybe she just

felt sorry for me, I can never really be sure. "Mentoring teachers during the induction

years has long been recognized as a powerful means to support and acclimate new

teachers to the profession" (Bressman, Winter, & Efron, 2018, p. 162). In subsequent

years, I needed her help less and less and found other mentors, but because she agreed to

mentor me, I am still a teacher. Let me explain.

2.1.1.1. The Reluctant Mentor

Janine, my reluctant mentor, was an African American woman in her mid 40s

when I met her and had been a teacher for nearly twenty years my first year of teaching.

She taught the special education students and was a no-nonsense type of person. The

main thing that I took away from her was that I was the grown-up in the room and that

the students needed to understand that. Routine was very important, and I needed to be a

consistent part of my students' lives. Many of them came from low socio-economic

home situations, and adult figures in their lives tended to be in flux (Browman, Destin,

Carswell, Svoboda, 2017, p.46).   I observed her class at least once a week during my

planning period and learned what I could from her. This was a fairly one-way

relationship in which I gleaned as much information from her as I could. She made sure

that I knew how to write my lesson plans and that I kept a low profile on campus.

Apparently, I was not supposed to draw attention to myself or others out in the

temporary buildings. She never wanted any attention (good or bad) from the

administration. She once smacked me in the back of the head for asking a question

during a faculty meeting after school, saying that if I wanted to know something to ask

her, not the principal (apparently, she wanted to leave, or she wanted me to ask her

later). We got along well for the most part, and after that first year I did not need her as

much and ended up having to find another mentor.

2.1.1.2. The Adjacent Mentor

The next year, I taught English as a Second Language in the temporary buildings

until the middle of October, when one of the English/Language Arts (ELA) teachers

quit. My principal asked me to take the Elementary Self-Contained exam so that I could

be placed in that classroom. Ever the team player, I took the exam and passed. I moved

from the temporary buildings to the main part of the campus and from teaching a

maximum of ten ESL students in a class to twenty-five students of varying abilities. I

realized, once again, I needed another mentor. By this time, my original mentor and I

had gotten to know each other better on a personal level, and this time around she was

more amenable to being my mentor. I was never quite sure why she had been so hostile

about being my mentor the previous year. Was it because I was a beginning teacher and

even more likely to leave? Or was it because I was Caucasian, and she was African-

American? Of course, I will never know. But I did learn to not take her mentoring for granted.

My new mentor, Dana, was also an African-American woman in her mid-30s, had the same mentoring style as Janine, and had been teaching almost as long as her, but in this instance, she was able to help me more with the English/Language Arts content area I was teaching in addition to the proverbial problem of most novice teachers: classroom management. She was considerably closer to my classroom than the year before, and we were able to meet more frequently throughout the year. With access to a mentor that was willing and able to help me, I felt better about teaching. I was also asked that year to be a part of the district English as a Second Language curriculum writing team and a member of my campus Critical Friends co-hort. During our meeting times, I was able to get to know the other teachers on campus on a personal level and understand some of the frustrations that they had about teaching at Macon Academy.

In December 1999, I gave birth to my first son. I went back to work at Macon Academy in February of 2000 and finished the year. I continued working at Macon in the fall of 2000, but in January of 2001, my husband's job transferred him to Seattle, Washington. I left Macon Academy in March of 2001 to settle in Renton, a suburb of Seattle, and my second son was born in June of 2001. At that time, I briefly entertained the thought of going back to teaching. What I found out about the Seattle area school systems was that they did not pay as well as Texas school districts and that I would basically be working to cover the cost of daycare. I had no family nearby, and I felt isolated without a job. I became increasingly depressed, and at that point, I decided that

I wanted to move back to Texas and back to my former school district. After a lengthy

discussion, my husband and I decided that we would move back to Texas in January of

2002.

Macon Academy had hired someone to take my place in the meantime, and so I

took a position at Spengler Intermediate (pseudonym), which was in the same

neighborhood as Macon Academy, in January of 2002. I taught the English component

of a Spanish bilingual class of 6th graders. I had no idea what I was doing, and knowing

that, I endeavored to find a mentor. The only person I could find was an exchange

teacher from Germany, Mr. Graff, who had been a teacher for several years in Germany

and had been on the Spengler campus for a year. He was teaching ESL in the pod next

to mine, and he showed me around the campus and where to get the things I needed for

my class. He would come by my classroom to check on me from time-to-time to make

sure that I was adjusting. I cannot say that I adjusted well; I felt miserable the entire

time.

I had several disturbing interactions with another male teacher during that

semester that caused me to seek employment elsewhere. I had mistakenly thought I was

being friendly with this teacher, but apparently, he thought we were dating. He had

grabbed my breasts and barred me from leaving campus by standing in front of the exit

and refusing to move on several occasions. When I vehemently stated one day that we

were not dating (nor would we ever), his response was, "not yet". I was very distressed

and the straw that broke the camel's back, as it were, was when I complained about his

behavior to the administration, the principal of the school told me that I should just avoid

having contact with him. When I told her that he was seeking me out, she acted as if there was nothing she could, or would, do about it. I began avoiding all areas where he might be at any given time. I avoided the teachers' lounge like the plague, and I began arriving just before school so that he could not catch me alone in my classroom. I spent my planning periods in other teachers' classrooms, and I would leave as soon as the bell rang after school. I was told later by other teachers at Spengler Intermediate that I was not the first to complain about his behavior, and that I should just let it go because nothing would be done about it. He was apparently a favorite of the principal. I did not feel safe on that campus, nor could I avoid him forever, so I decided to look for a job that was closer to home and far away from Spengler Intermediate. At that time my family had been living in a town thirty miles north of Houston, Texas, which is where my husband's job was located. Hence, I decided to apply for a teaching position in that school district.

2.1.4. Years Six Through Eleven: Transition from Urban to Suburban Education

In August 2002, I began teaching at Loomis Junior High School (pseudonym) which is located in a primarily middle-class suburb thirty minutes north of Houston. The students were vastly different from the students in my former school district as they were predominately white (80. 5%) with 5.5 % being African American and 12.6% Hispanic (AEIS Report: Loomis (pseudonym) Junior High, 2002). Teacher turnover in this school district was so low that many people joked that you had to wait until someone died just to get an interview. I did happen to get an interview for a seventh grade English/Language Arts position in May of 2002, that I did not get. However, in July, the

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administration called me back saying that someone quit unexpectedly, and they were

offering me her job. There was quite a difference between Macon Academy and Loomis

Junior High not only in demographics but in funding as well. Macon Academy had been

built somewhere between 1960 and 1966 whereas Loomis Junior High had been built in

the early 1990's. When I arrived at the junior high, it had been open less than 10 years.

Adkins (1968) points out that suburban school districts have better educational facilities,

teachers and "higher educational standards" (p. 243). Logan and Burdick (2017) also

assert that

> Nationally the average white or Asian student attends a school where about 40
>
> percent of students are eligible for free/reduced price lunches. The values for
>
> black, Hispanic, and Native American students are all above 60 percent, creating
>
> a 25- to 30-point differential with whites and Asians. Segregation translates into
>
> disparities in school quality that strongly favor white and Asian students overall.

Indeed, Loomis Junior High was still new in 2002, while Macon Academy custodians

struggled to keep the older building in working condition. There were very few teachers

at Macon Academy with more than 10 years of experience, but when I started at Loomis

there were several teachers with 25 or more years in that particular school alone.

Teacher demographics were also quite different; Macon Academy was made up of

primarily African American teachers and administrators (AEIS Report, Macon

Academy, 1997) while Loomis had no African American teachers (AEIS Report,

Loomis Junior High, 2002).

At Loomis Junior High, I taught seventh grade English/Language Arts and Yearbook for the first year. I was thrilled that my job would be closer to my home and my children. My assigned "mentor" at the time was the English/Language Arts department chair, Jennifer (pseudonym), and I could tell that she was not overly thrilled that I had been hired or that she had been assigned to be my mentor. Our relationship was not one of mentor-mentee but of supervisor-employee. In essence, I reported to her and she, in turn, told me what to teach.

My first year at the junior high was quite a difficult adjustment. I had been accustomed to being left alone and generally accepted as a competent teacher and adult. The predominant attitude of the administration at Loomis Junior High School at the time was that teachers could not be trusted to teach the content they were given and needed to be monitored at all times. I had been a teacher for five years, and I mistakenly thought that I had nothing left to learn about teaching. I thought I had the classroom management issue solved; I thought I knew the content; I thought I was a professional. But I was wrong. What I learned that first year at Loomis Junior High helped me to become a better professional and mentor to other teachers in later years. I did not want someone else to experience the same feelings of worthlessness, humiliation, and isolation that I felt that first year there.

That first year at Loomis, I was written up three separate times and put on a growth plan at the end of the year. It did not appear as if I was adjusting well to my new environment, or that my mentor helping me navigate my complex situation. After the third write up and being put on a growth plan, I was sure the administration was out to

get me. The first write up was for allowing a student to stay in my classroom to finish

her yearbook assignment. I had given the student a pass and told her to ask her regular

teacher if it would be okay for her to finish her yearbook page during that class period.

She told me that her teacher had said yes. Apparently, she had not, and I did not think to

call the teacher to check on the story. As a result, the student was counted absent. When

her mother became upset about her absence, it came out that she had been in my room.

We were both written up, the student for truancy and me for not following school and

district rules and procedures.

The second write up was for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Several

of the English and History teachers had been asked by the administration to attend a

national conference in Fort Worth, Texas in November of 2002. We were staying at the

Worthington Renaissance Hotel in downtown Fort Worth and attending the conference

at the convention center several blocks away. On the second day of the conference, I

wanted some down time to myself away from the crowds and my colleagues, and instead

of having lunch at the convention center, I returned to the hotel. The bar area was

almost empty and quiet, and someone was playing the piano. I went to sit at the tables in

the bar area (not at the bar itself) and listen to the music. A waitress asked me if I

wanted a drink, and I said no that I was getting ready to go to find lunch somewhere.

She told me that I could have lunch there in the bar area, and so I ordered lunch. I did

not order an alcoholic beverage.

At some point, my colleagues returned to the hotel and saw me sitting in the bar

area. No one ever mentioned that there might be a problem with me sitting in the bar
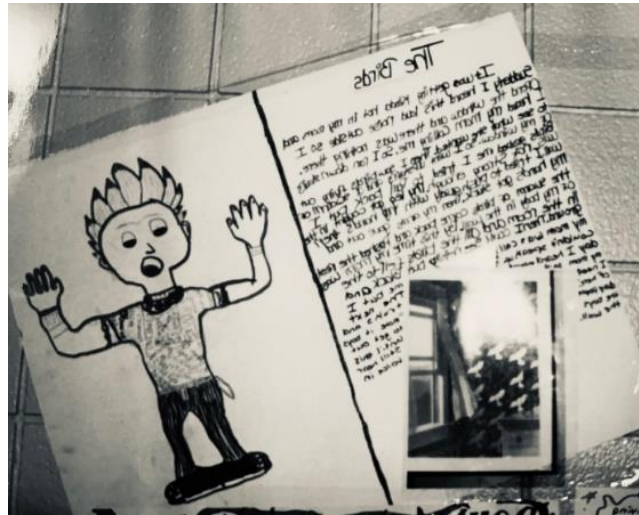
Figure 2. The Mysteries of Harris Burdick

area of a hotel in my Loomis Junior High shirt. I thought I was having lunch and

listening to music. What I found out when we returned to school, was this was a moral

turpitude issue. Being seen in a bar wearing my school shirt could have been

"misinterpreted" by someone. It clearly was misinterpreted by my colleagues.

My third write up was in the spring for going rogue and not teaching the

curriculum the way it had been outlined in the scope and sequence. My department

chair and mentor, Jennifer (pseudonym), and I engaged in a very heated argument about

teaching *Animal Farm* (1945) to pre-AP seventh graders. I felt like the themes and

subject matter would be way above my students understanding (not to mention mine),

and that it was just not appropriate for that grade level. "What is she [Jennifer]

thinking??? I don't even understand *Animal Farm*, how can I be expected to teach it to

7th graders? I don't care that it has been on the reading list forever, it just doesn't go

there!" (Journal Entry, March 18, 2003). In subsequent years, we taught *The Mysteries*

of Harris Burdick (Chris Van Allsburg, 1984), *Freak the Mighty* (Rodman Philbrick,

Figure 3. 7th Grade Writing Project

1993), *Esperanza Rising* (Pam Muñoz Ryan, 2000), and *The Red Badge of Courage*

(Stephen Crane, 1895) which were more in line with seventh-grade reading. I felt that

Animal Farm (1945) was more suited for high school students rather than junior high

students. We skimmed the book, watched the movie and then I substituted other

assignments which put my students ahead of the other English/Language Arts classes. I

brought the assignments (which were in the scope and sequence) to the principal to

prove that we were still doing the work, but I was written up anyway.

Ironically, at the end of the year, we met with the Director of Secondary

English/Language Arts to discuss which books we would be teaching the next year, and

he point-blank asked Jennifer why *Animal Farm* (1945) was on our list for seventh-

grade reading. She told him that it had "always" been on the list. He told her to take it

off as it was not appropriate for seventh graders, and it was on the 11th-grade reading

list. Jennifer became a counselor the next year, and we had nearly zero interactions after

that. Granted, I may have misinterpreted some people's intentions at the time, but

instead of explaining to me what they wanted, they just dismissed me until the next

incident arose. I will say that I do think that the administration at Loomis (pseudonym)

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Junior high did want me to resign and instead of firing me, they made my time there as difficult as they possibly could until I did quit. These accounts are things that happened to me, and I do not want them to happen to other teachers.

The next year (2003-2004) I was placed in the In-School Suspension (ISS) room for four of six periods in the day, and I was allowed to teach a "Creative Writing" class, but not English/Language Arts. I was also required to watch the Dr. Fred Jones series of classroom management videos and report to my administrator what I had learned from them. Oddly enough, those videos really did help with my teaching. I learned how to stay calm in stressful situations with students and adults because of the videos. This was very helpful during my time spent in ISS with students who were less than cooperative. I was written up at least once a year for various infractions until I resigned in 2008 from Loomis (pseudonym) Junior High. I struggled over that six-year period that I was employed there to find someone whom I could consider a mentor. I never did find anyone to mentor me, but I found other teachers in need of mentoring that did not involve just needing to know how to turn in lesson plans on Fridays.

2.1.1.3. The Novice Mentor

My first experience at mentoring at Loomis Junior High was for a new-ish teacher named Julian (pseudonym) during the 2005-2006 school year. He was a short, dark-haired man in his mid-thirties, and he had been teaching for several years in a private school district near Dallas, Texas. I never quite understood why he had moved to our town in particular. He seemed to be an odd duck because he did not seem to fit the teacher profile. He was not particularly friendly with the students, parents or with other

teachers and was brusque bordering on rude. He was intensely private and kept to himself, and my interactions with him were often brief as he did not want to participate in idle chit chat. He was very blunt and always got straight to the point. I later learned that he was an amateur taxidermist on the side, and that was his true calling. This specific year I had been pulled into Principal Dickson's (pseudonym) office two weeks before school started and told that instead of Creative Writing and ISS, I would now be teaching a full load of seventh and eighth grade Language Arts and mentoring a new teacher. That was also the year I started my master's degree program in Curriculum and Instruction at an online university and was asked by the administration to co-sponsor the cheerleaders four weeks into the school year. My sons were four and five at the time, and I was finding it increasingly frustrating that I was spending more time at the junior high school than I was with them. That year I was written up for yelling at the principal during our Family Fun Night because I was fed up with the lack of support that I was receiving from the new department chair, Annie (pseudonym), and the administration. That was the second year that we had the Family Fun Night, and the year before, I had not been expected to do anything but show up and help serve spaghetti. That year, I was officially back in the Language Arts department, and we were required to set up a booth in the big gym. Haley (pseudonym), Julian and I were in charge of the eighth grade Language Arts booth. Haley had been the interim English/Language Arts department chair the previous year and was somewhat disgruntled about Annie being the new chair as Haley thought she deserved the position because she had been at the school longer than the rest of the English teachers. She had been feeding me a steady line of

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misinformation about how bad Annie was at being department chair for months, so by the time we got to Family Fun Night, I was already furious and frustrated about Annie being absent. Julian was absolutely no help whatsoever, and Haley and I were left to set everything up on our own. She and I had spent over $250 of our own money on decorations, candy and game tokens for our booth. I had already missed an important kindergarten meeting that week for my oldest son, because of cheerleading, and I was becoming more and more agitated as the night went on. Julian kept wandering off as parents, and their children began lining up at our booth, and Annie was still nowhere to be found. About this time, a woman and her six children came up to play at our booth. We had, what I thought, was a large tub of candy, but after her children had helped themselves, we were down to half, and our seventh and eighth-grade students had not been by. The idea was for our students to read a Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) question, shoot a basket and get a piece of candy. With just the two of us running the booth, Haley and I could not keep track of the candy or the children. It was about the third trip around that I politely asked this woman and her six children not to take any more candy. I tried to explain to her that we wanted to save some for our students, but instead, she and her six offspring stormed out of the gym. It was at this time that Julian decided to return. I turned to Haley at that point and told her to be ready for the principal to show up. I have no idea what this lady told our principal, but less than three minutes later he came marching across the gym floor with a look on his face like he had smelled something rotten. In retrospect, I think I could have handled the situation better, but after this 6'3 scowling man stuck his finger in my face and accused

us of behaving inappropriately, I lost what was left of my mind, and I unloaded all of my frustration and anger onto him in front of the rest of staff and faculty. This made an already awkward situation with Julian even more difficult, as now I looked like a lunatic.

Julian was never one for idle chit-chat and he just wanted to get the information that he needed and move on. This was fine with me as I was already overwhelmed with the rest of my workload, and as all my previous mentoring experiences had been somewhat disastrous, I had no idea how to mentor this new teacher on campus. My experiences with being mentored had not been successful, and I did not think that I would be a good fit for the job, which is what I had told principal at the beginning of the year. He all but patted me on the head and told me it would be fine. I realized then that I was not assigned to be a mentor because I was an outstanding teacher, but because I was available, and quite possibly because the administration wanted to add more to my already full plate to convince me to resign. Julian and I were about the same age, I think I was older by a couple of years, but I never could connect with him on a personal basis. I started with the basics and what I knew the most about: lesson plans and curriculum. He was teaching Pre-Advanced Placement (AP) eighth grade Language Arts with one section of on level ELA. I was teaching all on level students, and we shared a common planning period. For the first four weeks of school, we met weekly, after that, it tapered off to once a month, and finally to hallway talk. "He [Julian] is just so dismissive. He has everything figured out and he doesn't want anything from me. Why am I even bothering with this?" (Journal Entry, October 7, 2005). He did not seem interested in anything that I had to say and mostly ignored my advice in all areas. I remember around
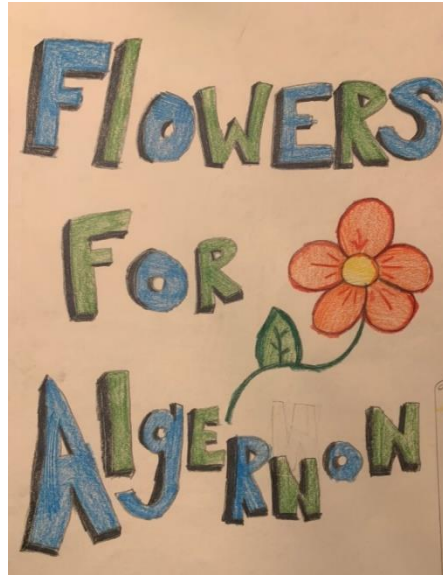
Figure 4. Flowers for Algernon
from "Charlie"

the third six weeks of the school year (end of November) that he wanted to teach *The*

Scarlet Ibis by James Hurst (1960). This book was not in the scope and sequence for

that particular six weeks, and I advised him to stick with the curriculum guide, at least

for the year. We could always make suggestions for book additions at the end of the

year. I had already been written up that year for yelling at the principal, and I had also

been written up two years earlier for going "rogue" as it were, because I did not want to

teach *Animal Farm* by George Orwell (1945) to my seventh-grade pre-AP English class.

Animal Farm (1945) was an allegory of the events that followed the Russian Revolution

in 1917, I did not feel that I had the background in the Russian Revolution or Russian

History to do it justice, nor did I think it was educationally appropriate for seventh

graders. I was not given any resources or background information about the book. I was

just told that I had to teach it. I decided to skim over the book with the students,

highlighting the characters and what they stood for, explain the themes, and then showed

the movie which took approximately two weeks to complete. Apparently, this was

supposed to be a six-week lesson, and I deviated from the scope and sequence. When my department chair found out, she was furious, and I was advised to do what I was told. I refused, and the principal wrote me up. I explained all of this, in detail, to Julian, who said he was not worried about it and he was going to teach it anyway. Needless to say, when the department chair found out, she was less than happy about Julian doing his own thing. Annie explained that he should stick with the curriculum that we had already outlined for the third six weeks. He did not, and that was his first write up of the year. Julian went on to have several more write-ups that year due to his need to do things his way. He resigned in May to open a taxidermist shop in the Houston area, and I was done with mentoring anyone ever again. Or so I thought.

2.1.1.4. The Up-and-Coming Mentor

My next experience with mentoring was, in my mind, more successful and enjoyable. Ray (pseudonym) was a new teacher who had just graduated from Sam Houston State University. He was in his mid-twenties and was well over six feet tall with strawberry blonde hair and the beginnings of a beard when I first met him. He was very friendly and open but, since there had been so much friction with my last mentee, I opted out of being an official mentor for the 2006-2007 school year (or really any year). Ray's official mentor was the department chair, Annie, however, since they did not share the same planning time or teach the same subject, it was left to me to fill in the blanks for Ray. He was the Pre-AP English teacher and an assistant defensive coordinator for seventh-grade football, and we had the same planning period. My schedule had not changed; however, as I was still teaching seventh and eighth grade on level

English/Language Arts (ELA). Ray was much more open and wanted to learn about everything which made mentoring him reasonably easy. Being a new teacher, Ray did not have an ego or an attitude of superiority. He knew that he did not know anything and that he would need help that first year of teaching.

As a new twenty-something college graduate, he had very little baggage and had no preconceived notions about what teaching should be like. Again, I started with the basic lesson planning and curriculum development with him. For the first six weeks or so, we met almost daily about different aspects of running an eighth-grade classroom. Every day I answered dozens of questions that ranged in topic from classroom management and grading to lesson ideas and student discipline. His enthusiasm for teaching made me want to be a better teacher, and so we collaborated on lessons frequently. We both enjoyed being entertained by our students, and so our lessons were often interesting and hilarious at the same time. Halloween was an especially fun time of year for us as we incorporated "The Simpsons" into our Edgar Allan Poe unit. Many of our units incorporated popular culture at the time, which made students more interested in what we were doing. Ray and I had a great time thinking up new and entertaining ways to teach students English. "The Simpson's lesson went very well. The kids loved the reading of "The Raven" by James Earl Jones and I will definitely use this again next year. I am thinking about using another Simpson's episode for 'Flowers for Algernon'" (Journal Entry, November 3, 2006). Unfortunately, Ray only spent one year at Loomis Junior High and moved on to teach ninth grade English at the high school the next year. He spent two years at the high school and moved on to another

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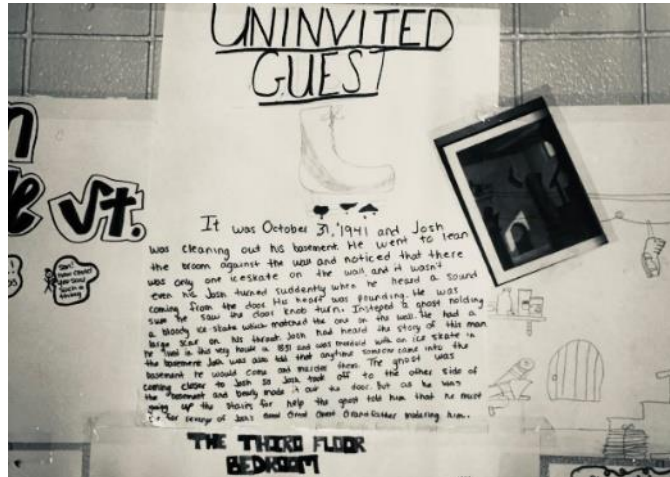
Figure 5. The Mysteries of Harris Burdick

school district in the Houston area and continues to teach English I in that district at present. Ray and I are still friends on Facebook, and so I have been able to keep in touch with him over the years.

My next venture into mentoring was during the 2007-2008 school year, which happened to be my last in the school district. Peter (pseudonym) became the new eighth-grade Pre-AP English teacher and a seventh-grade football coach that year, and he also had several years of teaching under his belt. Unlike Julian, however, Peter liked to talk and joke around, and his overall demeanor was very relaxed and being nearly the same age, we had a great deal in common. He was well over six feet (the top of my head came up to his underarm) with salt and pepper hair. Again, the mentor of record was Annie, but I was the one that shared the common planning time and subject matter with Peter. Peter and I formed a very solid relationship from the very start. He had been teaching eighth grade English/Language Arts in his former school district near Dallas/Fort Worth, and he did not need much coaching. His wife was an executive for a large corporation and had been transferred to the Houston area. Since I had already

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worked with Ray the year before on all of the eighth-grade AP-English curricula, it was a snap showing Peter which lessons to teach and when to teach them. For the most part, because Peter was a coach, I took care of the planning and making copies for his class. We mostly had lunch together every day and vented about being underpaid and overworked. I am not sure how much mentoring I actually accomplished with Peter. He seemed to take my advice about school procedures and regulations with a grain of salt, as most of us did, and work with the resources that we were given. He was appreciative of all the help that I offered, and I believe that he learned a few things that he could use in his classes. That was also the year that one of my students committed suicide in October and shortly thereafter I decided that I would not be returning to the school.

Lilliana (pseudonym) was a bright, smart Hispanic thirteen-year-old girl in my first-period eighth grade English/Language Arts class. She was active in her school and with her church and she seemed to have the same problems that regular thirteen-year old's had: boys, grades and parents. I received a call on a Wednesday evening in early October from my assistant principal saying that my student had been admitted to a Houston area hospital and was on life support. She had hanged herself in her closest with a telephone cord, and she would most likely not survive the night. My administrator explained that her parents would be taking her off life support within a few hours as Lilliana was brain dead. She died moments after the machines were turned off. The rest of my evening was a blur. The next morning (Thursday) the principal of the school called all of the teachers into the library. We were told at that time that we were not to discuss Lilliana's death with any of our students. If students wished to discuss

anything, they were to be sent to the counselor. I am still confused to this day about this directive. This decision by the administration seemed par for the course (callous and unfeeling), and I went back to my classroom to begin the day. Lilliana had been Catholic, and several of her classmates in my first-period class went to church with her and were well aware of what had happened. They were distraught. However, one of my students had no idea what had happened. When Chelsea (pseudonym) asked me what was going on, I told her that I had a "gag order" on this topic and that we were not allowed to discuss it in class. At the exact moment the words "gag order" came out of my mouth, the "tattle tale teacher" walked into the room. She was there to check on something inconsequential and left my room fairly quickly. Less than ten minutes later, the counselor (Jennifer) entered my classroom to tell me that the principal wanted to see me immediately. As it was still first period, I was mystified as to what I could have already done to warrant such a meeting so abruptly that early in the day. Jennifer was not very forthcoming with any information, so I trotted down to the principal's office. Principal Wick (pseudonym) was standing in her doorway with her arms crossed in front of her with a scowl on her face, and when she patronizingly instructed me to "sit down" the adrenaline ripped through my spine. I realized at that point that my assistant principal was standing in the room behind one of the chairs, and I instantly knew that this meeting was about to go south. I did not sit down, I stood behind my chair, and when the principal took her seat behind her desk, she instructed me to sit down again. I told her I was fine to stand. At this point, my assistant principal, Mike (pseudonym), firmly nudged me to sit down as he shut the office door. I sat down, and the feeling of

being trapped overwhelmed me. The principal then asked me what she had instructed all of us to do that morning in the library pertaining to Lilliana's suicide. I replied that we were not to discuss it with our classes. She informed me that someone (we all know who) had informed her that I was talking about Lilliana's suicide in my class. I told her that the information she had received was incorrect and that we had not been discussing anything about Lilliana's death. However, I had been explaining to a student why we could not talk about it when another teacher walked into my classroom. This simple admission seemed to throw the principal off. She said that she had been told that I had been discussing my students' suicide. I reiterated that I had not been discussing anything inappropriate with my class. At this point she called me a liar and that she had expected more from me. She would be writing me up for not following her instructions and lying to her. The last thing I remember is planting my hands squarely on her desk and leaning over to tell her that she did not know me well enough to expect anything from me at all. That was when Mike grabbed my shoulder hard and pushed me out the door and straight into his office. The relationship I had with Mike had been an interesting one. He had come to Loomis four years previously from another school district and had been my appraiser and my advisor to an extent. I trusted him, and in turn, he knew that I was doing my level best every day to be the teacher everyone wanted me to be. That day, however, was not one of those days. That day, Mike told me to "unload" in his office, and so I did. I screamed at him, and I wept uncontrollably, not only for the loss of Lilliana but about the unfairness of life in general. And he sat with me without saying a word or passing judgement. When the storm had passed, he told me

that he was going to call my husband to come to pick me up because he did not think it was a good idea for me to be driving in such a fragile emotional state. I remember my husband coming to pick me up, loading me in the car and then tucking me into bed. I did not go back to school until the following Monday, and at that point, I had decided that I would not be returning to that school the next year.

Peter and I planned as often as we could after that so that he would be prepared for the following year to be on his own teaching the Pre-AP courses. I continued to make copies and plan for him, but now I included detailed instructions about when specific topics were to be taught at that level. Once football season was over, he was able to spend more time with me planning for the next year and making his own copies. During the spring semester, I was employed part-time with Venkman Junior College (pseudonym) and ended up staying employed with them for four years before I moved on to a larger four-year university. I left Peter at the end of the 2007-2008 school year with more activities for Pre-AP than he knew what to do with and my phone number in case he ever needed anything. I still lived in town and told him that I could come by whenever he needed me to. He only needed my help one time the next year, and then his wife was transferred back to the Fort Worth area in the spring. He is still an eighth grade English/Language Arts teacher in a school district just outside Fort Worth. He and I also keep in touch on Facebook.

Figure 6. Travis and me on "Twin Day"

2.1.1.5. The Accidental Mentor

My final mentoring attempt, in my eyes, was a complete and utter failure. I

began teaching 11th and 12th grade English in a large land grant university town in

central Texas in the fall of 2018. I had reached a point in my graduate degree program

that I could retain full-time employment and conduct research at the same time. It did

not hurt that the school paid more than the graduate salary I was making at the time. I

met Travis (pseudonym) at our new teacher in-service for Gaines High School

(pseudonym) in August of 2018. He would be teaching AP and Honors sophomore

English and was getting his teaching certificate through an online alternative

certification program. He had been substituting in a school district south of Houston, for

the spring semester and had gotten a job offer to teach sophomore English and be the

Assistant Varsity Soccer coach at Gaines High School (pseudonym). He seemed excited

to be part of the English department and was even more excited about being a soccer coach. Travis had a mentor assigned to him at the beginning of the year, a fellow coach and 10th grade Honors English teacher. His mentor, Lance (pseudonym), was the head swimming coach, and he had been teaching about 18 or 19 years my first year at Gaines High School. However, Travis was a travelling teacher with no classroom of his own. He had been given a cart for his computer and papers, but he had to travel to other teachers' classrooms during their planning periods to teach his classes. This situation was less than ideal for Travis (a brand-new teacher), and for the other teachers whose classrooms he was using. The week before school started, Travis was having a difficult time finding a place to store his cart when he was coaching soccer. His mentor teacher had no suggestions for him, as his classroom was full and could not accommodate the cart. I overheard Travis complaining about his situation to another new teacher, and I suggested that he could leave his cart in my room because it was on the way to and from the other classrooms in which he taught. For a brand-new teacher, I could see how not having a permanent classroom in which to teach could be a problem. My classroom was spacious, as I had taken out several plastic bookshelves from the previous teacher, and he stored his cart in my room when it was not in use. After the first few weeks of school, he began spending his planning period in my classroom observing how I taught and interacted with my students. We eventually found a classroom for Travis by the cafeteria by the end of September. It was an oddly shaped room that had been used for lunch ISS but was big enough to accommodate 25 or more students and desks. I helped him find lamps, a couch and chairs, and other school supplies to decorate his room with.
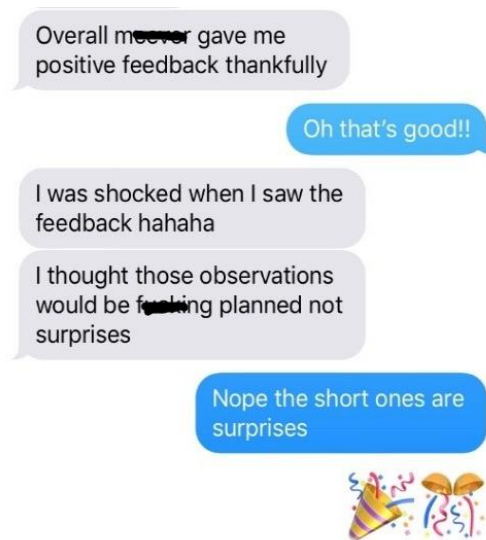
Figure 7. Text Message from Travis

I would come down on my planning period to watch him teach, and having his own

classroom made it much easier to observe him.

I had not intended to be a mentor to Travis. I never really fully intend to do

many things. Most of these situations that I find myself in are accidental by nature,

usually because no one else will do them. In this case, I was available to talk whenever

Travis needed to talk or ask questions. These conversations would typically take place

before school and throughout the day as he would spend his planning period in my

classroom because he had no classroom of his own to go to. Several weeks into the

school year, Travis became increasingly overwhelmed with his workload and other

responsibilities that he began to talk about quitting. He felt disrespected by the

administration because they had asked him to complete several hours of online training.

The problem with this was that he, nor I, had access to the online professional

development course and would have to wait for an administrator to grant access. He

became frustrated at the lack of attention being given to the "new hires" as it seemed that

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the administration was not aware that we were already overtaxed at that point, some five weeks after the semester had begun. These online professional development courses had been completed over the summer by the rest of the staff. As a veteran teacher, I have become used to these types of frustrations, and I tried to explain to Travis, that we would be given access at some point and that the administration would not count anything against us for not having the training completed at a particular time. Once we finally gained access to the professional development course, we devoted several hours of our own time to watch the videos and take the tests. For a new teacher, I could see how this could become overwhelming when one has to create lesson plans and handouts, coach a sport and finish online professional development courses.

Travis has never had any formal university teacher education preparation. His teacher induction had been in the form of a substitute teacher position in a school district south of Houston, Texas. When Travis became upset about something (like excessive professional development training, or administrator observations), I definitely empathized with him. As I have aged, however, I have become numb to the everyday annoyances of district policies and procedures. I have learned to prioritize my responsibilities and plan far enough ahead that I very rarely am surprised by a deadline. Even when the administration does manage to pop something unexpected on me, I usually do not have much to move around. In Travis' case, he became agitated every time he was asked to do something more than teaching and coach. I do not think novice teachers should be asked to do anything other than teach their first year, and it is difficult for me to remain an "objective observer" in these situations. I have felt on more than
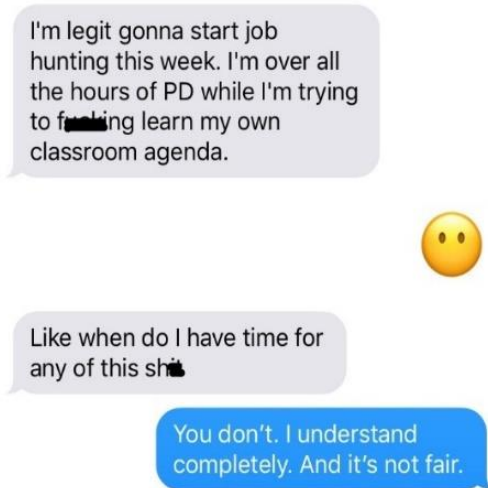
Figure 8. Text message from Travis

one occasion, the urge to march down to an administrator's office and tell them their

business and that overextending new teachers is a sure-fire way of getting them to resign

at the end of the year and in Travis' case, before the end of the first semester.

Unfortunately, I was unable to help Travis. He resigned in the middle of

November 2018, after teaching for three and a half months. His main complaint was that

he felt no support what-so-ever from the administration and his debts exceeded his

paychecks. He was struggling to pay bills and buy groceries and decided to seek

employment elsewhere. He found a position working for an oil company as a

"measuring while drilling" operator in West Texas. He worked 17-18 hours a day, seven

days a week, but was paid twice as much as what he was making as a 10th-grade public-

school teacher and coach. Travis and I keep in touch occasionally via text messages. He

now works for a marketing company in Austin, Texas and has been admitted to a

university to complete his Master's degree in Business.

As I continue teaching, I have come to realize that my accidental mentorship, in part, is purposeful, if not intentional. I have not taken any mentoring classes that many districts across the country and world require (Wong, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2017). I realized very early on in my career that having a mentor was crucial to my success in teaching. Indeed, having several mentors who were unsupportive and abusive shaped me as a person, teacher, and mentor. Mena, Hennissen, and Loughran (2017) explain that

> Mentoring is a cornerstone of teacher preparation programs not least because
>
> teaching is complex work and pre-service teacher education at the university
>
> cannot encompass all of the experiences necessary for preparing new teachers
>
> with the full complement of
>
> skills and knowledge for the ever-changing scenarios of practice (p. 48).

I did not come to teaching through a university, and I was not given the opportunities that student teachers have during student teaching to observe and then practice what I had observed in a low stake teaching situation. I was thrown into the deep end of the pool with no floatation device.

2.1.5. Unpacking Stories of Mentoring

The storied experiences shared are exemplars of teacher experiences and mentoring throughout their careers. My beginning years in teaching evidence my need for support as a novice teacher, and also the lack of support that I received. Wang and Odell (2002) discuss the requirements that many districts were implementing in the early 2000s that included linking district teacher induction and mentorship programs with

national professional teaching standards. The first of four obligations that they discuss

for mentors include mentors needing to be able to support novice teachers "in posing

problems for current teaching practice, uncovering assumptions underlying current

practice, and constructing and reconstructing the curriculum and teaching practice in the

unique context of teaching" (p. 489).   The second and third responsibilities for mentors,

according to Wang and Odell (2002), involve understanding the subject matter on a

deeper level and helping novice teachers engage students of multiple ability levels.

Mentor teachers are expected to have a "deep understanding of the relationship between

principled knowledge and teaching practice and to help novice teachers develop similar

understandings" (p. 489). Finally, mentors should not just deliver information to the

novice teacher but work collaboratively with them to discover effective teaching

practices (p. 490). After reading this article, it became clear as to why many of the

mentor teachers that I have interacted with were so hesitant to be mentors at all. Along

with having a full-time job teaching children concepts that will be tested by the state,

mentors are responsible for teaching a brand-new teacher how to teach and fully

understand the concepts of teaching children of differing ability levels, deeply

understanding the subject matter, and reflecting on their teaching practices throughout

the year. Not only are mentors responsible for the education of their own students, but

in reality, they are also partially responsible for the education of novice teachers'

students as well.

Hobson and Malderez (2013) discuss the need for proper training of mentor

teachers because mentoring has been "found to play an important role in the

acculturation of beginner teachers, helping them to understand and adapt to the norms,

standards, and expectations associated with teaching in general and the specific schools

in which they find themselves (p. 4). I found myself many times without someone who

could (or would) help me to navigate the waters of teaching. Hobson and Malderez

(2013) found in their study that in some cases mentors who are overly critical, or

judgmental, have damaged new teachers' self-esteem, caused them anxiety, and

"contributed to novice teachers leaving the field" (p. 4). They interviewed seventy-nine

student teachers at the end of their initial teaching programs, forty-six program

personnel, which included program leaders and mentors, and found that there was a

failure to provide effective mentoring at the "micro-(mentoring relationship), meso-

(institution), and macro-(national policy) levels" (p. 6). They discovered that the

mentors failed to create a safe space for their mentees in that the mentors all too often

were critical of the novice teachers' performance. "Judgementoring is perhaps most

visible in the frequent use by mentors of a restrictive 'feedback' strategy in post-lesson

discussions, typically involving a mentor-led evaluation of the 'positive' then 'negative'

features of a lesson, followed by suggestions for improvement" (p. 6).

Throughout my interactions with my mentees', I endeavored to stay away from

critical evaluations of teacher's performances. Instead, I would look for positive

elements in their lessons on which they could build. In fact, I was an instructional coach

in another district near the one I teach in currently for the spring semester of 2018, and

the principal of the school in which I was housed wanted me to evaluate the fifth and

sixth grade ELA teachers teaching. He had two teachers on growth plans, and he wanted

me to report all of the bad things that they were doing in their classrooms to him. I have

always believed that most people are doing the best that they can with what they have

been given, and in this case, these teachers were doing the best they could. Some people

are naturally gifted teachers who have a firm grasp of their content and classroom

management, and I am in awe on a regular basis. Some have to spend a bit more time

refining their lessons and working on keeping their class under control. The rest of us

fall somewhere in between. I refused to report anything negative about them; instead, I

told the principal that they were doing the best they could. Manning and Hobson (2017)

further state that not only does judgementoring negatively affect novice teachers, but that

it can also promote "a 'learned helplessness' that can result from an over-reliance on

others, which is antithetical to the development of learnacy" (p. 577). Indeed, I believe

that it is necessary for novice teachers to be able to reflect on their own teaching errors

without the fear of reprisals from older, more experienced teachers. Instead of telling a

new teacher what they did wrong and how to fix the problem, there should be a

discussion about what the novice believed went well during their lesson and what could

be improved upon.

2.1.6. Conclusion

I have always been an advocate for mentoring new teachers. In my twenty-one,

nearly twenty-two years of teaching, I have never seen a teacher that did not benefit

from a kind, caring, and involved mentor. The implications of this research can be

utilized by school districts nationally and internationally as mentors are a large part of

new teacher induction programs. It is in the best interest of all school districts, no matter

where they may be located geographically , to employ and retain novice teachers. I believe that the problems lie in the scheduling of mentors, personality conflicts between mentor/mentee, and the overwhelming responsibility placed on both mentor and mentee's shoulders for a successful year in public education. Overall, mentors and mentees at the very least should share a common planning period and subject area. Ideally, mentors and mentees would teach a lighter load and have more time to collaborate and evaluate teaching protocols so that the novice has enough time and space to learn from their mistakes. I also believe that novice teachers need to have a mentor for more than just the first year of teaching. Most novice teachers leave in the first five years of the profession. Even during my second and third years of teaching, I felt like I needed a mentor to help me as there were many things that I was still learning. At this point, I believe that more research should be conducted with novice and mentor teachers during the first three years of teaching. I also believe that there should be more research into the concept of teacher persistence in finding someone to mentor them. Indeed, many of the teachers that I have worked with over the years had nearly the exact same story as I did: having to search for a mentor. At what point do we stop pushing new teachers off into the deep end of the pool and expecting them to be able to swim? After realizing that each one of my mentors did not have my best interest at heart, I was forced to enlist the help of my surrounding teachers. These teachers, who had not volunteered to be a mentor, nor were getting paid to do so, mentored me through my first three years of teaching and helped me to make teaching my career instead of a job that I honestly thought about quitting at least 27 times a day. Mentor teachers should be offered

incentives for taking on the extra workload. This could take the form of a stipend or a

lighter class load because of the work required to train a new teacher. Novice teachers

also need a lighter load so that they can have more time to observe veteran teachers in

their classrooms. Just because one has graduated from university and started a teaching

position does not mean that learning is over. Indeed, in teaching, the learning has just

begun. Induction to the teaching field should not be painful, or cause novice teachers to

believe that they have made the wrong choice in careers. Teachers are too valuable a

resource to have their induction years left to chance. The first year of teaching in always

an adjustment and it is important for new teachers to have a safety net. The realities of

teaching and what new teachers believe will be their teaching experience are often vastly

different. Research had shown that forty to fifty percent of teachers leave teaching

before their fifth year and that attrition rate rises to 75% in rural and urban schools

(Ingersoll & Perda, 2012). School districts and campuses need to provide supportive and

nurturing mentoring experiences for new teachers so that they will continue to learn and

grow in their profession. Without this, the trend of teacher attrition will continue to rise.

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3. MENTORING AND TEACHER INDUCTION: IMPARTING PEARLS OF WISDOM

3.1. Introduction

This article is a meta-level analysis of the mentor-mentee interactions between mentor Helen and mentee J. D. at T. P. Yeager school as recounted by Craig, You, and Oh (2017) in their article "Pedagogy through the pearl metaphor: Teaching as a process of ongoing refinement." The narrative inquiry examined "a middle school teachers' knowledge of her pedagogical practices through the strand of pearls' metaphor that she employ[ed] to explain her teaching to herself, a beginning teacher whom she mentors and ourselves as researchers" (Craig, You, & Oh, 2017, p. 1). After analyzing Helen's stories as recounted in the article using my own researcher storied reflections as a comparison point, four emergent themes are unpacked: 1) teacher stories; 2) mentoring stories; 3) Helen's strands of pearls; and 4) stories of leaving.

3.1.1. Literature Review

3.1.1.1. Novice Teacher Needs

Novice teachers often feel ill-prepared for their first teaching assignments as Bickmore (2013) points out. These new teachers go from being public-school students to college students and then are thrust into the front of a classroom, responsible for 25-30 students, and expected to teach. No matter how much preservice university teacher training the novice teacher has had, it is never enough. The realities of teaching cannot be covered in five or six undergraduate courses. "Novice teachers need an environment where both their personal and professional needs can be addressed and subsequently

met" (p. 49). Bickmore (2013) develops the idea that new teachers are not equipped when they leave college to handle the rigors of teaching without a mentor to guide them. He explains that there are too many new teachers leaving the field after their first three years because of the requirements and duties that even some experienced teachers cannot manage by themselves. In addition to competitive salaries, and extensive opportunities for professional development, it is vital that new teachers have a mentor to guide them (Darling-Hammond, Wei, & Andree, 2010).   All too often new teachers are left on their own, without help or guidance. The resulting isolation that many teachers feel can exacerbate an already stressful situation in new teachers. Helen made an effort to include J.D. in the lesson planning process so that he would not be isolated. Her assistance gave J.D. the confidence to venture out on his own to create his own unique lessons that he later shared with Helen. Helen was then able to offer constructive feedback to J.D. before and after the lesson.

Bickmore (2013) stressed the importance of professional development for novice teachers and offers a more authentic professional development in the form of his program GEM (Group of English Mentors), which provided new teachers on his campus more access to "mentor" teachers. In this case, the novice teachers would share and offer ideas in an open dialog with the seasoned teachers, while the veterans offered their expertise in teaching and practice. Throughout the process, the novice teachers and experienced teachers seemed to form a bond with one another which became evident in some of the novice teachers comments later on, "the experienced teachers offered hope, suggestions, and during the break, several experienced teachers sought out the

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opportunity to talk one to one with novice teachers" (p. 56). Bickmore (2013) asserts

that frequently professional development and mentoring programs are a by-product of

state and local mandates and have little or no follow-up for teachers. It is essential for

novice teachers to have meaningful and productive professional relationships with

veteran teachers so that they can obtain the proficiencies and habits of master teachers.

Indeed, had I not had someone at the beginning of my career to guide me through my

first and second years of teaching, I may not have remained a teacher.

3.1.1.2. Mentoring

In the research literature, "mentoring is [described as] a complex, interpersonal,

and professional endeavor, which is different from structured induction programs" (Curtis,

2013, p. 42: See also Wong, 2004). Novice teachers need a mentor who will be committed

and willing to form a relationship rather than perform perfunctory tasks to discharge their

duty quickly. Irby (2013) states that,

> developmental relationships in mentoring [in] a *mentor/mentee dyad* is
>
> recognized as an evolutionary process via a recursive stream of progressive
>
> consciousness and action that builds support, trust, confidence, risk-taking, and
>
> visible positive transformation through dialog[ue] (includes negotiation,
>
> listening, reflecting, challenging, planning). (p. 333)

Mentor teachers need to be trained to help with novice teacher induction because high

levels of stress from tight schedules, classroom management, learning new content,

learning new technology, and standardized testing can take a toll on new teachers and

veteran teachers alike (Gagen & Bowie, 2005).

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To Gagen and Bowie (2005), "mentors who are effectively trained and have experience in the school can help with this transition" (p. 40). Mentor teachers are familiar with the school climate and can help novice teachers navigate the often overwhelming first year of teaching by providing support. This support can take the form of a shoulder to cry on, a kind voice, or words of encouragement to the novice teacher. "Mentors need to be advocates, collaborators, problem solvers, and strategists on behalf of both themselves and the novice teachers" (p. 41). Gagen and Bowie (2005) further explain that mentor teachers should ideally be experienced teachers that share common subject matter with the novice teacher. However, they do not specify the number of years the "experienced" teacher must have to be a mentor. They support the training of mentor teachers and note that many school districts do not require training or provide training for these teachers, citing that most districts believe that the teacher's "experience" should be adequate training to be a mentor. "Even though mentors may be very experienced teachers, they need skills in many areas that may require training" (p. 42). In the state of Texas, mentors are required to have a minimum of three years of teaching experience and complete a mentor training program (Texas Education Code, §21.458). However, in my case as a novice teacher in Texas, my mentors had been teaching for more than three years but had not completed any type of mentor induction/training programs.

Issues, however, that can arise between mentors and mentees. In my case, my very first mentor was annoyed that she had been given a mentee and took some of her frustration out on me. She was not required to take any classes on how to be an effective

mentor and her only real qualification was that she had been a teacher for 15 years. In essence, she was forced to be my mentor. Consequently, a relationship was not built between us and there was a breakdown in communication and meaningful feedback. Similarly, some of the issues between mentor teachers and novice teachers may stem from miscommunication due to the change in terminology associated with the teaching profession. Gagen and Bowie (2005) outline common terms that are often confused such as "student teacher" being changed to "teacher candidate," "cooperating teacher" being changed to "clinical faculty," and "teaching methods" being changed to "instructional strategies."

To alleviate such problems, Gagen and Bowie (2005) recommend that school districts offer mentor training workshops for teachers who have been chosen or who have volunteered to be mentors. Such programs should include topics on understanding novice teacher issues such as "inability to self-discriminate between effective and ineffective teaching, management of multidimensional classroom environments, communication with parents, students, and colleagues, management of time and resources, and emotional and professional needs of the novice teacher" (p. 44). The authors propose that the workshop be offered to all prospective mentor teachers before school begins and then to have follow-up sessions six weeks to two months after the beginning of the assignment. They agree that providing training to mentor teachers is one way of addressing the issues of retaining qualified teachers, "Successful novice teachers, backed up by effective mentors are more likely to remain in the profession, and will become potential mentors for the new professionals who come after them" (p. 45).

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Stanulis, Fallona, and Pearson (2002) discussed the issues that three novice teachers had with their mentors throughout their first year of teaching. In each case, the beginning teachers had feelings of inadequacy and confusion about their mentor's role and how they should respond. One teacher did not have a mentor and had to rely on the support group formed by the beginning teachers to garner ideas and techniques for her classroom. The other two had mentors, but neither mentor taught the same grade or content as the novice teachers. All three new teachers felt like they had been left on their own to figure out how to become an effective teacher with little to no guidance from their mentors. Each of the novice teachers had to come to terms with their feelings of inadequacy, frustration, and the dichotomy between their teaching philosophies and reality.

Not only is mentoring important to novice teachers, but the quality of the mentoring is significant as well (Richter, Kunter, Lüdtke, Klusmann, Anders, & Baumert, 2013). Richter's et al. goal was to study the frequency and quality of the mentoring to predict novice teacher's development and well-being in the first years of their careers. They based their framework on "teachers' professional competence that differentiates between professional knowledge, beliefs, motivational orientation, and self-regulation" (p. 167). Focusing on the influence of the mentoring on novice teachers' efficacy, enthusiasm, emotional well-being, and job satisfaction, Richter et al. looked at the effects of instructional support, psychological support, and role modeling techniques that mentor teachers used with their novice teachers (Richter et al., 2013). They examined in detail the differences between two models of mentoring: knowledge

transmission and knowledge transformation distinguished by Cochran-Smith and Paris

(1995). In these two models, knowledge transmission is the dissemination of

information from the mentor to the mentee, who is a passive recipient of the knowledge,

whereas the transformation model is more collaborative in which the mentor and mentee

create knowledge together. Richter et al. (2013) also discussed educative mentoring,

which can be traced back to Dewey, as a method in which mentors support the novices'

inquiry that "enables them to learn from practice" (p. 168). Richter et al. (2013)

examined another mentoring style which is also similar to educative mentoring:

> In apprenticeships, novices are introduced into a community through active
>
> participation in authentic tasks. Novice teachers acquire mastery in skills as they
>
> gradually become more involved in the community and its activities. A strict
>
> hierarchical relationship between expert and novice is not assumed. In line with
>
> these ideas of learning, we label this mentoring style constructivist-oriented
>
> mentoring. (p. 168)

In short, these methods of mentoring can all be used to determine the quality of

mentoring practices in schools. If we want "mentoring to improve the quality of

classroom teaching, then we need mentors who are teachers of teaching" (Norman &

Feiman-Nemser, 2005, p. 695).

3.1.1.3. Novice Teacher Migration and Attrition

A trend of beginning teachers migrating to other schools because of student

discipline, low salary, and lack of support from administrators has begun to develop over

the last decade (Parker, 2010). Howe (2006) adds that mentoring programs have been

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implemented in U.S. schools and other countries "due to the consensus that novice teachers benefit from mentor support" (p. 112). It is important that novices be paired with mentors who teach the same subject and be in the same proximity (Parker, 2010). In my experience, having close proximity to the novice is helpful as well as having the same planning periods which helps to foster the mentoring relationship. Parker (2010) also discussed the degree of assistance that the mentor teacher offers the novice teachers. Many schools and school districts do not have a policy on how frequently a mentor and mentee must meet throughout the day, week, semester or year, while others have a highly structured program which includes topics of discussion, instructional strategy planning, and formal observations of the novice teacher. In one of the school districts that I taught in, mentors and mentees were not required to meet, while in another, mentors and mentees met once a week.

Most novice teachers are more agreeable to more informal approaches to mentoring, such as having discussions or common planning periods during the day, rather than the more formal methods of being observed, observing the mentor teacher, or discussing instructional strategies (Parker, 2010). I have also found that the more informal forms of mentoring are a better fit for my personality. In my experience, the more formal the mentoring style, the less connection is made between the novice teacher and mentor. Indeed, there should be further research in the areas of matching mentors with novices, the degree of assistance provided by the mentors, and the frequency of interactions between the mentor and novice teacher (Parker, 2010).

Strong mentoring "can keep novices from abandoning. . . [ambitious pedagogies] in favor of what they may perceive as safer, less complex activities" (Feiman-Nemser (2001a) p. 1029), which means less busy work and worksheets for students. Inexperienced teachers, in particular, need support systems in place for them to be successful. Griffith, Steptoe, and Cropley (1999) discuss the relationship between workplace social support for teachers and the reduction of stressors which can lead to physical illness and increase the psychological well-being in those educators. We specifically scaffold the learning of new concepts for our students, why would we not do so for novice teachers? Mentor teachers should be offered incentives for taking on the extra workload of mentoring a neophyte teacher. This could take the form of a stipend, a lighter class load, or extra planning time because of the work required to train a new teacher. Novice teachers also need a lighter load so that they can have more time to observe veteran teachers in their classrooms. Just because one has graduated from university and started a teaching position does not mean that learning is over. Indeed, in teaching, the learning has just begun. Induction to the teaching field should not be painful, or cause novice teachers to believe that they have made the wrong choice in careers. Smethem (2007) documents the experience of one novice teacher, Ariane, whose induction year was a "disaster:"

> If I had been given the support … I would have improved my teaching more … When I was observed with them it was a bit late … something that could have been solved very quickly, just dragged on and on and on and on. (p. 473)

Ariane stated that there was a lack of adequate support and her mentor teacher was not really trained. Teacher attrition has been an issue for school districts for decades, and the problem is that no one knows exactly what to do about it. In 2001, According to Ingersoll, few studies " examined in detail which characteristics and conditions of schools are related to teacher turnover, especially with large-scale or representative data" and much of this data was focused on the teachers who leave the profession altogether (p. 503). However, since 2001 there have been numerous studies looking into teacher attrition and retention, all with varying results and observations. Indeed, it is not readily apparent which factors, or mix of factors, are causing teachers to leave teaching, if they do leave the teaching profession; it is apparent, however, that several factors at once lead to teacher migration, teacher attrition, or early teacher retirement, which also has been documented in several studies (Darling-Hammond, 2003, 2010, 2017; Ingersoll, 2003, 2014; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014). Most of the factors involve a combination of student behavior issues, lack of autonomy, and lack of administrative support. Hundreds of studies (Mitchell, Howard, Meetze-Hall, Hendrick & Sandlin, 2017) declare that teachers are quitting the profession in droves, and in almost all the studies, solutions to the problems are given; specifically, the increase in teacher's salaries, and effective, authentic mentorship.

3.1.2. Conceptual Framework

3.1.2.1. Experience

Each of the experiences that I have had, has helped to shape me as a mentor. Indeed, if I had not had ineffective mentors throughout my teaching career, I might not

have realized how important they really are to novice teachers. The same might also be true of Helen and J.D. Dewey (1997) believed that experience was both social and personal, and that "experiences grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences" (p. 2). To that end, each of us has a story to tell about our experiences in teaching. Many of us have traumatic experiences that shake us to the very bedrock of our teacher identities. My unpleasant experiences in teaching consistently revolved around other teachers and administrators and most often were the result of a miscommunication. Could an effective mentor have steered me through some of the issues that I had? Most likely, but I will never know for sure.

3.1.2.2. Story

In this meta-analysis of Helen's story, I am also able to retell and re-story my own experiences and the experiences of others in my circle of knowledge. According to Adams, Ellis, and Holman-Jones (2014), the personal meaning genre of research focuses on

> artistic and analytic demonstrations of how we come to know, name, and
> interpret personal and cultural experience. We use our experience to engage
> ourselves, others, culture(s), politics, and social research…. we confront the
> tension between insider and outsider perspectives, between social practice and
> social constraint. (p. 1)

As I reflect on my own experiences, I must believe that my experiences with being mentored and mentoring others is an optimal place to begin a narrative. Ellis and Bochner (2000) state that the "researcher's own memories of experience illuminate and

allow access to the sub-culture under study" (p. 735). As a novice educator, I did not feel like I was learning something that I could pass on to other teachers, however, when I became a teacher educator, I felt that my experiences (both negative and positive) could help future teachers as Helen probably thought as well as J.D.'s mentor. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) point out, however, that "stories and their meaning shift and change over time" (p. 9), and over time each one of the stories that I tell changes my viewpoint on my teaching practice. According to Lamott (2018), stories themselves are "mirrors, mentors, guide dogs…they free us from hubris…and tunnel vision…" (p. 98). Even more importantly, "they hold us together" by teaching us "what is important about life, why we are here and how it is best to behave, and that inside us, we have access to memories…observations…imagination." In a nutshell, stories provide "all that we need to come through…" (Lamott, 2018, p. 179).
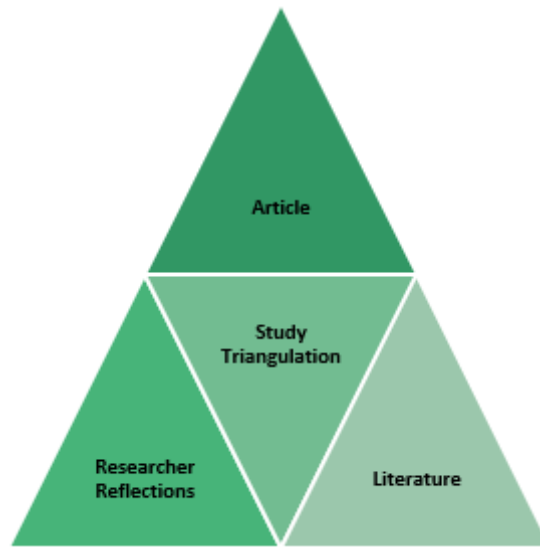
Figure 9. Study Triangulation

3.1.3. Methodology

This study utilizes narrative inquiry methods in a meta-level analysis of mentoring exchanges found in the article by Craig, You, and Oh (2017). Researcher reflections of personal experiences related to mentors and mentoring are used as a comparison point. Together with related literature, a triangulation is formed between the experiences presented in the article, my researcher reflections and the literature already summarized.

3.1.4. Teacher Stories

3.1.4.1. Helen's story.

Helen fell in love with teaching at a young age. When she was in fourth grade the Physical Education (P.E.) teacher fell ill, and her teacher chose her to plan and lead lessons for the class. Helen was already an active child and when her teacher put her in charge of teaching the P.E. lessons, she was "hooked" (Craig, You & Oh, 2015, p. 763). Helen's decision to enter teaching based on her desire to teach P.E. reiterates her passion

for the subject and the desire to impart to students the value of physical activity outside of a sport.

New teachers give many reasons for entering teaching which often reflect emotional motivations, such as a love for a particular content area (Richardson & Watt, 2006; Noddings, 1992) or a personal enjoyment in working with young people (Curtis, 2013; Sinclair, Dowson, & McInerney, 2006). I personally, entered the teaching field because I enjoyed seeing others learn something new. I taught swimming lessons and gymnastics throughout my teenage years and after I graduated college with a degree in English Literature, so I decided that teaching was the best place for me. I did not, however, enter the teaching field in the traditional manner. Unlike Helen, I graduated university with a degree and then entered an Alternative Certification Program.

Helen was born in a northern state and attended a large university in that area. The university had a highly respected physical education program, but upon graduation, Helen was unable to find employment close to home. At that point, Helen decided to move to a mid-southern city in the United States.   She found that the "coaching mentality" of the south to be at odds with her philosophy about teaching physical education. She had learned at university that "P.E. is the place where even the nerd [bookworm] can have fun" (Craig, You & Oh, 2015, p. 763). She viewed physical education as a discipline that incentivizes students to lead more active and healthy lives. She began working at a high school and with her colleague started a program called "Hiding the Physical of Education."

Helen: I call it camouflaging the activity. They don't realize that they are actually

working at something [a stated unit objective] …

JeongAe: But they are enjoying it …

Helen: They have a good time doing it. And then, all of a sudden, we give them a

traditional test to do and they find out, 'I know something.' (Craig, You

& Oh, 2015, p. 765)

She and her colleague had similar philosophies about teaching physical education and

the program worked well for a while. However, her colleague took a position at private

school so that his daughter could attend tuition-free. The replacement teacher did not

share Helen's philosophy about teaching and was not willing to maintain the integrity of

the program and Helen subsequently decided that she would resign from the school and

the profession to work in a pet store.

3.1.4.2. My story.

My first year of teaching was one of the most stressful experiences of my life

primarily because I had not come to teaching in the traditional manner. I came to the

teaching profession by way of alternative certification through my local Education

Service Center (ESC). This meant that I only needed a college degree in a field such as

English, History, Science or Math to qualify to become a teacher. Indeed, I had

graduated from university with a Bachelor of Arts in English with a minor in Spanish,

and teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) seemed the perfect fit for me. I did

not have the usual methods courses that prepared pre-service teachers for their first jobs

in teaching. What I did have was several crash courses in what teaching would be like and then was hired by a large inner Houston, Texas area school district in 1997.

My first teaching assignment was fourth and fifth grade English as a Second Language (ESL) at a magnet school for Mathematics, Science and Fine Arts situated in a historically African American neighborhood and one of the last schools in the U.S. to fully desegregate. These students were of mostly low socio-economic status (68.4%) and largely African American (45.7%) and increasingly Hispanic (34.8%) (AEIS Report: Macon (pseudonym) Academy, 1997). Teacher turnover in this school district was fairly high and new teachers especially were not expected to last very long. In fact, one of my Education Service Center cohort members resigned in October, just two months into her first year of teaching to return to working for an airline. She told me that teaching was not what she expected and that her administration was not supportive of her or new teachers in general. Apparently, her mentor wanted nothing to do with her and all but refused to help her. What she thought teaching would be and what teaching actually was, were two separate ideas all together.

My assigned mentor my first year of teaching expressed to me on numerous occasions that she was too busy to help me and that I would be on my own. Dana (pseudonym) explained that she had been told by the administration that she was to be my mentor, and that she had no interest in the position. I spent my first semester just barely keeping my head above water, and I always felt anxious about how I was doing. I was miserable and I had figured out that if I did not get help quickly, I was not going to be a teacher for very long. My mother had been an elementary school teacher for twenty

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years in Oklahoma, Texas and internationally, and offered some assistance. However, at the time, my parents were living in India, and we did not get to talk very often. Soon after, I was able to find a mentor that was reluctant, but willing and able to help me with the challenges I faced at the magnet school. Janine (pseudonym) grudgingly took me under her wing and helped guide me through the rest of my first year of teaching. Her mentoring style was no-nonsense, and she made it clear that she was doing me a favor because new teachers did not seem to last long at that school or in the district. She taught the special education pull-out students across the hall from me and I observed her interactions with her students on a daily basis. She was both mother and disciplinarian to her students and a stable constant presence in her students' lives. She rarely called in sick and seemed to know all about her students' home lives, even threatening on occasion to "show up for dinner" if they did not behave in her class. In subsequent years, I needed her assistance less and less, but because of her mentoring, I am still teaching.

My second year of teaching, however, I was thrown into the "deep end of the pool" as it were. One of the veteran regular English/Language Arts (ELA) teachers had resigned in mid-October because she had "had enough" and I was asked by the principal of the school to take over the class. I was required to take the elementary self-contained state exam and then I went from having 10-12 ESL students in four 90-minute classes to 25-28 students of varying abilities in my classes. I realized very quickly that I was going to need another mentor, or I was going to drown. My original mentor was only a few doors down and was now willing to throw me a line at that point. Dana had the same

mentoring style as my reluctant mentor: no-nonsense. She too was motherly and strict and had a steady presence in her students' lives. She and I worked well together that year and she also helped me with not only ELA content, but classroom management. That year was one of the best years of my teaching career and helped to affirm my choice of becoming a teacher and I believe that a willing mentor may have made the difference.

In August of 2002, I began teaching at a predominately white, middle class junior high school 30 minutes north of Houston. This particular year was also difficult as I had a hard time adjusting to the culture of the school and the district. This district was notoriously challenging to get into as teachers tended to stay until their retirement. I had an interview at the junior high school for a seventh-grade English/Language Arts (ELA) position in May of 2002, but I did not get that particular position. However, in July the principal called me back saying that one of the teachers had quit unexpectedly and they wanted to offer me her job. I was new to the junior high English/Language Arts (ELA) content and fourth and fifth graders were different than seventh and eighth graders in stature and attitude. My new students' demographics were vastly different from my students in my former school district as they were by in large white (80.5%) with 5.5 % being African American and 12.6% Hispanic (AEIS Report: Loomis (pseudonym) Junior High, 2002).

Again, my assigned mentor, Jennifer (pseudonym), wanted nothing to do with me and I was largely left on my own to figure things out. She was, however, the department chair and I never really felt as if she wanted me in the department. Jennifer

was dismissive and aloof and instead of a mentor/mentee relationship we had more of an employer/employee relationship. I reported to her, and in turn she told me what I was to teach. She would also make a point of reporting to the principal everything that I did incorrectly no matter how small or inconsequential. In that first year at Loomis (pseudonym) Junior High alone, I was written up three separate times for infractions that Jennifer could have easily steered me through.

At that point, I began questioning my decision to remain a teacher and where I could go from there. I cried almost every day, and my partner said I should just give up teaching and find a new career. After teaching for six years, I had no idea what else I could do. Every year at the junior high felt like a new disaster and it seemed I was never quite prepared for the challenges that were thrown at me. I oscillated between depression and anxiety until I resigned from the school in 2008.

My first year at Loomis Junior High, I taught in a pod with a History teacher, a Mathematics teacher and a Science teacher. While they were pleasant enough to be around, they could not help me with many of the content questions that I had. I taught five sections of 7th grade English/Language Arts (ELA) and one section of Yearbook that first year. I had many unpleasant interactions with the administration on that campus that first year at Loomis Junior High which resulted in me having three disciplinary write-ups. Two of those incidences could have been mitigated by a caring and involved mentor. The second year I taught at the junior high I was put on a growth plan by the administration, and for the next two years I was assigned Creative Writing for one period and In School Suspension (ISS) for the rest of the day.

Just as I had begun to accept my lot in life, Principal Dickson (pseudonym) pulled me into his office two weeks before school started and informed me that I would be going back to teaching ELA. During that fourth year, I was assigned 7th- and 8th-grade ELA, co-cheerleading sponsor, and to be a mentor to a new eighth-grade Pre-AP (Advanced Placement) ELA teacher on our campus—Julian. Julian made it clear on several occasions that he did not require my assistance at any time. He had been a teacher for several years in a school district near Dallas, Texas and my job that year was to indoctrinate him into our school culture. After the first few months of school, I realized that my attempts to mentor Julian were falling on deaf ears, and I just gave up. He and I clashed on several occasions, but for the most part I did not interfere with what he wanted to do in his classroom. When anyone asked how he was doing, I would say that "he was doing his best." He refused to take my advice on anything, and even after repeated warnings from our department chair, he continued to do whatever he wanted regardless of the consequences. Apparently, his true calling was taxidermy and he only stayed one year at the junior high.

The next year I had a much better experience with being a mentor, albeit unintentionally. The administrators at my school had hired a brand-new teacher straight out of university to teach eighth grade Pre-AP English/Language Arts. Because Ray (pseudonym) was a new teacher, his actual mentor was our department chair, Annie (pseudonym). Unfortunately, they shared neither a planning period nor common subject area; she taught seventh grade on level ELA and he taught eighth grade Pre-AP ELA. He and I shared both planning periods and subject area. For the first few weeks of the

school year, Ray tried to meet with Annie with little success. Annie was not available before school and Ray, as a coach, had football practice after school. My previous experience with Julian had left a sour taste in my mouth about mentoring, so I felt reluctant to offer my assistance to Ray, but, as the weeks progressed, I watched him flounder with no idea what to do or who to turn to for advice. Helen seemed to take on J.D. as a mentee with no hesitation whatsoever. However, they did share the same subject area (sixth grade P.E.) and I imagine the same planning period. I honestly thought that my department chair, Annie, would be able to make time for Ray, or one of the other teachers would provide some assistance. As days turned into weeks, I realized I was the only person who could really help him and that was when I decided to step up. He and I would plan together almost daily, and he had such an open mind to new ideas and techniques. He brought a wealth of knowledge from the university and became an essential part of the eighth-grade team. He left at the end of the year to teach at the high school across the street from the junior high. He taught ninth grade English for a few years and then moved on to another large district north of Houston, Texas.

3.1.5. Strands of Pearls

Helen's metaphor of a "strand of pearls" described how she supported her mentee through his first year of teaching. "Helen helped J. D. to create a strand of pearls while she, by virtue of working alongside him, refined the pearls on her strand so her students would have 'the same thrills' as those students enrolled in his classes" (Craig, You, & Oh, 2017, p.777). Helen explained the working relationship between herself and J.D. to Cheryl Craig:

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Helen: J.D. and I … are constantly bouncing ideas back and forth. We just did a

dance unit together … He came back from a workshop and I was in my football

unit, but he

said, 'Here try this'. 'Let's see how it works'.

Cheryl: You must think it's wonderful to work with him?

Helen: Oh, he's great. He comes back with ideas, shares them with me, and we

try them.

He liked what he saw the students do this year on [dance] teams.

Cheryl: So he encouraged you to try it?

Helen: He said, 'You might like to see how it works' … So he watched my class

do it and

then his class did it. There was a director in each group …

Cheryl: Right …

Helen: And there was a choreographer, and each member of each group had a

job. It's amazing how much discipline you don't have to do because J.D. and I

only spoke with the directors. …Their job is to take back to the other students

what needs to be done … (p. 768).

Later, Helen tells JeongAe You:

Helen: Oh my gosh … He's at the top of his game right now, not that he doesn't

have more learning to do … But he has grown and we trying to get our game

better … And

you can see his confidence, and it is fun to see him grow (p. 768).

Helen did not only impart her pearls of wisdom upon J.D. She also helped Jason realize that there was more to P.E. than just training for a sport. Their combined fishing trip allowed Jason to connect with his more creative side and found that they could include most, if not all of the core subjects in the one project. As Jason states,

> We included all the core disciplines in our unit. There is math in the angle one throws a fishing rod just like there is an angle to how one throws a ball on the basketball court. Both are being thrown at angles and there is physics to it … There is also the anatomy of the body at work and at play in the fishing unit of study … English is involved because students write in reflective notebooks and history is basically where the activity originated (pg. 771).

The project initially started with 50 handpicked students from sixth and seventh grade and quickly evolved into 1500 students being able to attend the following school year. Essentially, Helen demonstrated to her department, core subject teachers, and administrators that P.E. was just as rigorous a subject matter as Mathematics or Language Arts.

While working with Ray, I discovered that not only was I helping him hone his craft, but I was deepening my understanding of curriculum through the modeling and assistance I was giving him. I also realized that if I did not help him, he would be on his own, and I remembered quite vividly the feeling of panic of not knowing precisely what I was supposed to do in a classroom. Ray had his student teaching experiences to fall back on, but that experience would only get him so far in his first year of teaching. I worked with Ray the entire year on several different units and activities for his AP

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classes. Throughout the year, we would often debrief over what did and did not work in each one of the lessons. By the end of the year, Ray was adept at finding and incorporating original ideas and themes into his lessons on his own. Ray cultivated at least three "pearls" that year that he was later able to take with him when he moved on to teach English I at the high school. "In a nutshell, Helen, as his informal mentor, worked alongside J. D. in ways that enabled fruitful conversations between theory (the workshop ideas) and practice (lived experience) to take place" (Craig et al., 2017, p.768). By working with Ray that year, I came to realize that being a mentor could be one of the most satisfying experiences that a teacher could have. Not only did I inform his practice for years to come, but he also informed mine. Indeed, over the last twenty years, my strand of pearls has grown like that of Helen and as a mentor I have blossomed from the accidental and unwilling mentor into the purposeful and thoughtful mentor that I am today.

3.1.6. Stories to Leave By

In Helen's stories to live by and to leave by (Craig et al, 2017), readers learn that she spent 14 years as a P.E. teacher when she decided to leave the teaching field. She later returned to teaching; however, she reached this original decision because she did "not want to be robbed of her passion" for P.E. teaching in this way. She did not want to 'mentally go through that' and risk being 'bitter' for the lifespan of her career" (p.765). When I left public school teaching in 2008, I had given up on being a teacher of K-12 students. I had arrived at the conclusion that my input to the educational system was unimportant and unappreciated. I had become bitter and dreaded ever going back to a

K-12 classroom. However, in the fall of 2018, I decided to take a position at a local high

school in the town where I was attending graduate school. I had been out of the public-

school milieu for over 10 years and I anticipated that I would have a light load of

teaching 11th and 12th graders with very few responsibilities so that I could continue

working on my doctorate with minimal interference. During "New Teacher University,"

the district's new teacher orientation, I met Travis (pseudonym), a new 10th grade

Honors English teacher and assistant varsity soccer coach for the high school. Travis

had been substituting in the Houston area, but was working on his alternative

certification through an online teacher certification program. He had some idea of what

teaching was like, but because he was a substitute, he had far fewer responsibilities than

he would have as a full-time teacher and coach. Travis had a mentor assigned to him at

the beginning of the year, a fellow coach and 10th and 11th grade Honors English teacher.

They did not, however, share a common planning period and his mentor was not given

any extra time to observe Travis in the classroom. Travis, in fact, did not have a

classroom of his own at the beginning of the year and he floated around from classroom

to classroom. Most of their interactions were what I like to call "hallway conferences",

seeing each other in passing, having a short conversation, and moving on. Lance

(pseudonym) had very little time between coaching swimming and planning for two

content areas to devote to a new teacher. While I think that Lance did the best that he

could, I believe that Travis should have been given a mentor with more time to dedicate

to mentoring a beginning teacher. I accidentally ended up with the job because Lance

was frequently unavailable, and I had time to spare. Travis, however, did not stay for

the entire year at the high school. He left in mid-November because, as he put it, his "bills outweighed his paychecks". He decided that he would take a position in the oil field to make more money and come back to teaching at a later date. He was adamant that his decision was solely based on the issues that he was having with his salary, and not because of students. Travis moved on to work in the oil field for several months before taking a job in marketing in central Texas and is pursuing his master's in business. It seems that his aspirations of becoming a teacher had been overtaken by other stories to live and leave by.

3.1.6.1. My Story to leave by.

We never learn where Helen ends up or if she retires from teaching, and I often wonder how long Helen stayed at T.P. Yeager Middle School. How many more pearls of wisdom did she impart to J.D. and her colleagues over the next few years? Was she able to mentor another new teacher? Was J.D. able to mentor new teachers and pass on Helen's legacy of pearls? My own story to leave by is quite different from that of Helen in that I am not actually leaving the teaching profession. I have always been a teacher in some form or another and I have basically traded one level of teaching position for another; I merely transitioned from public school teaching to being a teacher of teachers at the university level. Instead of teaching K-12 students, I teach young aspiring teachers how to educate students in the K-12 classroom. I realize now that I will again, be considered a new teacher, in a new school setting, with considerably less experience than my colleagues. I will most definitely be assigned a mentor, but the real question is,

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will that mentor be able to guide me through my first few years of the university level teaching, research and service?

3.1.7. Conclusion

In this meta-analysis of Helen's story of teaching and mentoring, I have embedded the counterpoint of my own stories of teaching and mentoring. From this interweaving, we can see that not all mentor relationships have to be formal assignments. Indeed, in many cases, the informal relationship between a mentor and mentee is more helpful than the formal, assigned mentor/mentee relationship. In Helen's case, she mentored J.D. informally because they shared a common subject area (sixth grade P.E.), and were able to communicate frequently throughout the day with little interference. Helen was able to easily observe J.D.'s classes and provide pointers for him, and he, in turn, was able to observe a master teacher in action. These informal interactions created a bond between the two teachers that enabled J.D. to continue to improve his teaching practice in a safe and accepting environment. Certainly, Helen was open to many of J.D.'s ideas for lessons that he suggested to her. In my own teaching practice, my informal mentors were the teachers that helped me the most. They encouraged me to try new things in my classes and were there to help me when things did not go as planned. They created a safe environment for me to grow as a teacher, which helped me to become a mentor later. However, I did not have one mentor; each time I changed grade levels, or subject areas I found someone nearby that was willing to help me. I found mentors at every grade level and across all subject areas that were able to inform my practice for over twenty years of teaching. As abundantly evident in Helen

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and J.D.'s relationship—as well as in my own experiences as well, "mentoring is a joint venture that requires both parties (mentor and mentee) the moral commitment and responsibility to take an active part in the learning process of growth, development, and change" (Orland-Barak, 2010, p.208).

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4. MENTORING AND NOVICE TEACHERS: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AT A

LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL IN CENTRAL TEXAS

4.1 Introduction

Some time ago, I was asked by an undergraduate student in one of my Social Studies Methods courses about mentoring programs at public schools. Over my years as a lecturer at local universities, this question seemed to be one of the largest concerns expressed by pre-service teachers. This particular student was concerned about having a mentor assigned to her with whom she may or may not form a positive relationship. Her main query was what she would do if she was left on her own in her first year of teaching. One of her friends had graduated the year before and apparently had had a very tough first year of teaching. Her friend had been matched with a mentor who had been less than enthusiastic about being saddled with a brand-new teacher. Overall, the experience had been less than productive. My student wanted to make sure that this type of experience was an anomaly and that she would most likely not be given a bitter, cynical mentor who had no intentions of helping her during her first year of teaching. I pondered this thought for a moment. I then explained to my student that there was no way of knowing what type of mentor she would receive her first day of school (some mentors are amazing), I could only share with her my experiences with my assigned mentors that I had over the years as a public school teacher. Unfortunately, none of them had been good. In my experience, the relationship I had with my assigned mentors was not as fulfilling as the relationships I forged with my informal mentors. I explained,

however, that if the assigned mentor was unwilling to help, there was always someone who would eventually take pity on a new teacher and lend a hand. I told her that it was important to never to give up in the search and sometimes the most unlikely mentor was the best one as was my case. Soon thereafter, I began to wonder about the experiences of other teachers and how they survived their first years of teaching. Would their experiences be similar to mine or would they have had more positive and productive relationships with their assigned mentors? I then began to ask my colleagues and former teacher friends about their mentoring experiences and was dismayed to find a common theme: many of us had been left to fend for ourselves during our first years of teaching. Indeed, many of my colleagues remembered not having a mentor and having to find someone in their building or department to help them. Even after many years of being teachers, the recollection of their initial years of teaching seemed to bring about a visceral reaction in them and me. Many of us still felt angry about being abandoned. I realized that I truly had not gotten over not having a caring, supportive mentor my first few years and I was quite envious of those that did. What kind of teacher would I have been if I had not had to seek out someone to help me when I was in crisis? Would my career trajectory have been different?

I personally came to the teaching profession by way of alternative certification. Unlike a traditional teacher preparation program lodged in a university, my alternative certification training was provided by a regional Education Service Center in Houston, Texas and did not allow for observation of experienced teachers or practice teaching in low stakes situations. I did not have the usual methods courses in English/Language

Arts, Science, Mathematics, or Social Studies that prepared pre-service teachers for their first jobs in teaching. Rather, I had several crash courses in what teaching would be like and then was hired by a large Houston area school district in 1997. I was not able to student teach before I was assigned a classroom of my own; my student teacher training was during my first year of flesh-and-blood teaching.

My own induction years were particularly difficult as mentors were generally assigned to me and were not invited to be mentors in the first place. This created resentment on the part of the mentor towards me, which resulted in a less than favorable mentee/mentor situation. Lacking mentor support, I always felt like I was left behind and scrambling to catch up to the other teachers. Most often I did not feel supported or even, in some cases, liked by my colleagues or the administrators on my campus. I remember the constant daily struggle to find someone, anyone, to help me make sense of administrative expectations, classroom management, and lesson planning. I remember feeling like I was drowning, and later on in my career, many of the teachers that I spoke to metaphorically likened their first years of teaching to drowning as well. This particular metaphor, as well as the metaphor of "trial by fire" (Craig, 2013) were common expressions in my teaching community, and what I thought was a unique situation was, in fact, quite the norm for many teachers (Peirce & Martinez, 2012; Trautmann, 2008).

4.1.1. Teacher Attrition and Mentoring

It has long been held that new teacher attrition has been a crisis for school districts across the United States for the last four decades (Darling-Hammond,

2003,2010, 2017; Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014; Izadinia, 2015). According to researchers, a promising solution for reducing new teacher attrition is for districts to provide, among other things, a mentor teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2003, 2010, 2017; Ingersoll, 2001). A supportive mentor teacher providing feedback to a novice teacher during his/her first year can mean the difference between that novice teacher having a career as a teacher or looking for another job at the end of the year (in some cases, before the end of the year). Approximately 4.5 % of novice teachers exit before the end of the school year (Redding & Henry, 2019). This presents problems for schools and school districts because classes must be covered by substitute teachers who have no vested interest in the students and must rely on other teachers to provide lessons. Substitute teachers are not required to have a college degree and have little to no training in classroom management techniques. In some instances when novices quit mid-year, classes are divided and students are spread out among other teachers, causing a burden for other teachers and the students originally assigned to them.

Many new teachers enter the teaching field distressingly unprepared for the realities of teaching children and adolescents. Researchers have found a correlation between stress and teacher attrition (Cassidy, 2017; Buckley, Abbott & Franey, 2017; Brown & Uehara, 1999). This attrition was most likely to surface in the form of a teacher changing campuses rather than quitting the profession altogether. There is additional evidence that indicates that teachers who lack adequate initial preparation are more likely to leave the profession (Pearman & LeFever-Davis, 2012). The Pearman and LeFever-Davis (2012) study investigated the idea that teacher attrition may very well

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begin in pre-service teacher education programs where some exit even before being placed in schools. There is an "important link between high-stakes testing, accountability policies, and teacher attrition and that test-based accountability significantly predicted stress, attrition, and burnout" (Ryan, von der Embse, Pendergast, Segool & Schwing, 2017, p. 8). However, positive campus environments may deter teachers from leaving. In fact, "school climate may be an important mediation of the relationship between accountability pressures, stress, and attrition and migration of teachers" (p. 4).

In many cases of teachers leaving, the campus climate was an indicator of whether teachers stayed or resigned; however, further research into how classroom management, student behavior, and student demographics affect teacher attrition is needed as well (Ryan et al., 2017). The lack of classroom control can contribute to students behaving poorly and not being able to learn, which causes students to perform poorly on standardized exams. If teachers' salaries and tenure are based on the performance of students, teachers will not stay in the profession long because secondary attribution demands agency that does not reside with them (Ryan et al., 2017). The issue with teacher attrition is that everyone has been aware of the problem for decades, but there is no one hard and fast way of dealing with it. Ingersoll (2001) states that few studies "have examined in detail which characteristics and conditions of schools are related to teacher turnover, especially with large-scale or representative data" and much of this data is focused on the teachers who leave the profession altogether not those who migrate to other campuses or leave and come back (p. 503). However, since 2001 there

have been numerous studies looking into teacher attrition and retention, all with varying results and observations. Indeed, it is not readily apparent which factors, or mix of factors, are causing teachers to leave teaching, if they do leave the teaching profession; it is apparent, however, that several factors at once lead to teacher migration, teacher attrition, or early teacher retirement, which also has been documented in several studies (Darling-Hammond, 2003, 2010, 2017; Ingersoll, 2003, 2014; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014). Most of the factors involve a combination of student behavior issues, lack of autonomy, and lack of administrative support. Hundreds of studies declare that teachers are quitting the profession in droves, and in almost all the studies, solutions to the problems are given (Mitchell, Howard, Meetze-Hall, Hendrick & Sandlin, 2017).

Anhorn (2008), Gagen and Bowie (2005), and Parker (2010) specifically provide instructions on how to accomplish effective teacher mentoring, which could stem the tide of teacher attrition. They include such examples such as: integrating a mentoring program into the new teacher program, modeling effective teaching practices, incorporating strong administrative support, and not assigning new teachers school duties (p. 20). However, in the four separate school districts that I have worked over the last 20 years, I have yet to see an actual mentor-training program. Not one teacher that I have spoken to has participated in this type of program nor have they heard of such a program. This does not mean that there is no mentor training program in the state of Texas, it just means that the teachers that I have spoken to who have had mentors or have been mentors have never participated in such a course. This presents a problem

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because the veteran teachers who are being asked to mentor novice teachers have little to no experience in teaching adults and often times have no idea what their duties might be in regards to mentoring (Gagen & Bowie, 2005). In my case, I offered Travis (pseudonym) as much help as I possibly could. In my interview with Travis I asked him to tell me about his first few months of teaching:

> **Travis:** It was one of the most polarizing experience of my life. On one hand it was one of the most enjoyable periods of my professional career, getting to spend time with young adults helping them navigate daily life in high school, mentoring the students, and making a great friend in my own personal mentor. On the other hand, I was incredibly stressed out from the massive workload, the low pay, and the pressures and expectations placed on first year teachers by the district and administration.

In sum, it is essential for teachers, new or otherwise, to have positive experiences and a nurturing school environment for them to want to continue in the teaching field.

Schafer, Long and Clandinin (2012) document several articles in which mentoring programs have been found to help with the attrition and migration of novice teachers. "In Schlichte et al.'s study with beginning special educators, they found that positive mentoring can help to alleviate beginning teacher burnout" (p. 109) and Algozzine, Gretes, Queen, and Cowan-Hathcock (2007) conducted a study that utilized a cross-sectional instrument to survey third-year teachers who had participated in induction programs. They found that (a) mentoring by experienced teachers, (b) release time for observing (both same field and variant field), (c) common planning times, and

(d) creating networks of new and experienced teachers was found to help support

beginning teachers better cope with entry into the profession (p.111). They also cite

Guarino et al. (2006) saying that they found "in their review of the literature, that (a)

mentoring and induction programs (collegial support), and (b) more administrative

support were associated with higher rates of retention of beginning teachers" (p. 111).

Not only do they point out the necessity of mentor teachers for the induction of novice

teachers, but also the need for these mentors to be properly trained as well. Schafer,

Long, and Clandinin (2012) also point out that just retaining teachers may not be

enough. They discuss the need of sustaining novice teachers during their tenure in order

to retain them, "We suggest the need to shift the conversation from one focused only on

retaining teachers toward a conversation about sustaining teachers throughout their

careers" (p. 118). Many beginning teachers in the state of Texas are not afforded a

mentor teacher during their second or third year of teaching which may lead to their

quitting the profession or migrating to another more supportive environment. Bressman,

Winter, and Efron (2018) echo the same sentiment of Schafer, Long, & Clandinin (2012)

that mentoring is necessary throughout the teaching career which can help alleviate

frustration, cynicism and burnout.

4.1.2. Mentor Teachers

Linda Gagen and Sandra Bowie (2005) outline the need to train mentor teachers

to help with novice teacher induction citing high levels of stress from tight schedules,

classroom management, learning new content, learning new technology, and

standardized testing. "Mentors who are effectively trained and have experience in the

school can help with this transition" (p.40). Mentor teachers are familiar with the school climate and can help novice teachers navigate the often overwhelming first year of teaching by providing support. This support can take the form of a shoulder to cry on, a kind voice, or words of encouragement to the novice teacher. "Mentors need to be advocates, collaborators, problem solvers, and strategists on behalf of both themselves and the novice teachers" (p. 41). Gagen and Bowie (2005) explain that mentor teachers should ideally be experienced teachers that share common subject matter with the novice teacher. However, they do not specify the number of years the "experienced" teacher must have to be a mentor. The state of Texas requires that mentor teachers "have at least three complete years of teaching experience and a superior history of improving student performance" (Texas Education Code §21.458). In my case, I had the requisite years of teaching experience to be a mentor, but I am still unsure what "a superior history of improving student performance" actually means. Gagen and Bowie (2005) support the training of mentor teachers and note that many school districts do not require training or provide training for these teachers, citing that most districts believe that the teacher's "experience" should be adequate training to be a mentor. "Even though mentors may be very experienced teachers, they need skills in many areas that may require training" (p.42). The authors point out that some of the issues between the mentor teachers and novice teachers may stem from the miscommunication due to the change in terminology associated with the teaching profession. They include a chart to outline the common terms often confused such as "student teacher" being changed to "teacher candidate", "cooperating teacher" being changed to "clinical faculty", and "teaching methods" being

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changed to "instructional strategies." Gagen and Bowie (2005) recommend that school districts offer mentor training workshops for teachers who have been chosen or volunteered to be mentors. This program should include topics on understanding novice teacher issues such as "inability to self-discriminate between effective and ineffective teaching, management of multidimensional classroom environments, communication with parents, students, and colleagues, management of time and resources, and emotional and professional needs of the novice teacher" (p.44). They propose that the workshop be offered to all prospective mentor teachers before school begins and then to have follow-up sessions six weeks to two months after the beginning of the assignment. They agree that providing training to mentor teachers is one way of addressing the issues of retaining qualified teachers, "Successful novice teachers, backed up by effective mentors are more likely to remain in the profession, and will become potential mentors for the new professionals who come after them" (p.45). I asked Travis (pseudonym) what his relationship was like with his mentors:

> **Travis**: Without my mentor, I would have felt isolated and completely lost with no guidance. She would bring me lunches understanding my financial situation was pretty dire, she would purchase me classroom supplies so that I could support my students, and she would be a confidante to help me clear my head and vent issues that we were both actively going through with the school and administration.

Parker (2010) discusses teacher migration and the possibility of mentor teachers helping novice teachers stay in their positions in her article "Mentoring Practices to

Keep Teachers in Schools". She describes the trend of teachers migrating to other

schools because of student discipline, low salary and lack of support from

administrators. Mentoring programs have been implemented in U.S. schools and other

countries due to the consensus that novice teachers benefit from mentor support (Howe,

2006). Parker (2010) points out that it is important that novices be paired with mentors

who teach the same subject and be in the same proximity. In my experience, having

close proximity to the novice is helpful as well as having the same planning periods

which helps to foster the mentoring relationship. Parker (2010) also discussed the degree

of assistance that the mentor teacher offers the novice teachers. Many schools and school

districts do not have a policy on how frequently a mentor and mentee must meet

throughout the day, week, semester or year, while others have a highly structured

program which includes topics of discussion, instructional strategy planning, and formal

observations of the novice teacher. She also found that novice teachers were more

agreeable to more informal approaches to mentoring, such as having discussions or

planning during the day, rather than the more formal approaches of being observed,

observing the mentor teacher or discussing instructional strategies. I have also found that

the more informal forms of mentoring are a better fit to my personality. In my

experience, the more formal the mentoring style the less connection is made between the

novice teacher and mentor.

Novice teachers often feel ill-prepared for their first teaching assignments as

Bickmore (2013) points out. They go from being a public-school student, to college

student and then are thrust into the front of a classroom, responsible for 25-30 students,

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and expected to teach. No matter how much preservice university teacher training the novice teacher has had, it is never enough. The realities of teaching cannot be covered in six or seven undergraduate courses. "Novice teachers need an environment where both their personal and professional needs can be addressed and subsequently met" (p.49). Bickmore (2013) develops the idea that new teachers are not equipped when they leave college to handle the rigors of teaching without a mentor to guide them. He explains that there are too many new teachers leaving the field after their first three years because of the requirements and duties that even some experienced teachers cannot handle on their own. All too often new teachers are left on their own, without help or guidance. This isolation that most teachers feel, can exacerbate an already stressful situation in new teachers. Not only is mentoring important to novice teachers, but the quality of the mentoring is significant as well (Richter, Kunter, Lüdtke, Klusmann, Anders, & Baumert, 2013). The frequency and quality of the mentoring to predicts novice teacher's development and well-being in the first years of their careers. Richter et al. (2013) looked at the effects of instructional support, psychological support, and role modeling techniques that mentor teachers used with their novice teachers. They examined in detail the differences between two models of mentoring: knowledge transmission and knowledge transformation distinguished by Cochran-Smith and Paris (1995). In these two models, knowledge transmission is the dissemination of information from the mentor to the mentee, who is a passive recipient of the knowledge, and the transformation model is more collaborative in which the mentor and mentee create knowledge together.

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All too often novice teachers have to contend with being alone and feeling unsupported in their first year of teaching. Teachers, novice or otherwise, need to be in a supportive and nurturing environment if they are to thrive and flourish. Indeed, several studies (Schafer, Long, & Clandinin, 2012; Craig, 2013; Smethem, 2007; Anhorn, 2008) have shown the negative effects of a toxic working environment on teacher retention. Other studies have shown that happy and supported teachers stay where they are (Bickmore, 2013). Unfortunately, because there are so many different types and styles of mentoring programs it is hard to pin down one that actually works. Clearly, mentoring works for novice teachers and it is important that new teachers have a mentor. However, it also seems that the mentoring style is a factor in how the novice perceives their experiences: too formal can feel oppressive and too informal can seem like the mentor does not care. The trick is to strike a balance of formal and informal, constructivist and conventional practices throughout the school year. This ongoing partnership between the mentor and the mentee that should be cultivated and maintained for more than the novice teacher's induction years.

4.1.3. Overview of Study

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to determine if having a mentor teacher during one's first years of teaching helped novice teachers to stay in the field. Eight participating high school teachers were interviewed about their experiences, or non-experiences, of being mentored as beginning teachers, and their experiences of mentoring other teachers (novice or otherwise) as veteran teachers themselves. Through

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the interviews, this study sought to ascertain how mentoring influences teacher decisions to stay in a certain school, change campuses, or leave the profession altogether.

The research questions for this study:

1. To what extent does an informal/formal mentor influence a novice teacher to remain in the field? I explored the influences of my informal/formal mentor teachers in my first article, "The Accidental Mentor". In this article, I explore how formal and informal mentors have influenced my colleagues and the impact the mentoring has had on their teaching careers.

2. Why do some veteran teachers decide to become mentors while others consider mentoring a burden? In this article, I discuss some of the issues of becoming a mentor teacher. Being a mentor teacher does require a great deal of time an effort, and many veteran teachers, while admitting that mentoring is important, refuse to volunteer for the job.

3. How can school systems alleviate some of the burden so that veteran teachers will be more willing to mentor a new teacher? Finally, I discuss ways that school districts and campuses can alleviate some of the extra workload so that veteran teachers will be more willing to formally mentor a novice teachers.

4.1.4. Methodology

4.1.1.1. Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry examines the experiences of participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in their own terms, using their own words. It is grounded in Dewey's (1934/1997) assertion that education is experience that is personal, social, context-based,

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and occurs over time. The intersection of social interaction, temporality, and the added dimension of place or context form a three-dimensional inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The term narrative inquiry was first coined by Clandinin and Connelly in the 1990s. They state that, "our interest as [narrative researchers] is lived experience, that is, in lives and how they are lived" (p. xxii), and that experience is the critical term in narrative inquiries (2000, p. 2). I believe that the best way to understand the situated experiences of novice teachers and their mentors is through detailed stories of their lived experiences, as stories are a way to access teacher knowledge and meaning-making (Craig, 1997). Because of its focus on experience and tell the detailed stories of teachers lived experiences, I chose narrative inquiry methodology and methods for research into mentoring novice teachers.

Narrative inquiry, according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), has been used in various social science and humanities disciplines since the 1980s. More specifically, narrative inquiry methodology and methods have been widely employed in the fields of anthropology, psychology, psychiatry, and education. Bloor and Wood (2006) state, "linguists might examine the internal structure of narratives, psychologists might focus on the process of recalling and summarizing stories, and anthropologist might look at the functions of stories cross-culturally" (p. 119). Teachers teach through the use of narrative and narrative inquiries study teachers' experiences using narrative as both method and form (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

There are three common places for narrative inquiry to take place. Connelly and Clandinin (2000) discuss the three-dimensional inquiry space in which they describe

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three common places for narrative inquiry to take place. These places are similar to Schwab's (1973) four commonplaces of experience: subject matter, learner, teacher, and the milieu. They discuss their terms and spaces about narrative inquiry as:

> Personal and social (interaction); past, present, and future (continuity); combined with the notion of place (situation). This set of terms creates a metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along the third" (p. 50).

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) also assert the need for a "simultaneous exploration of all three commonplaces" (p. 479) for narrative inquiry to be effective. Temporality is described as events and people always having a past, present, and a future and that it is "important to always try to understand people, places, and events as in process, as always in transition" (Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007, p. 23). By delving inward (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), by accessing my feelings of being a new teacher in a new school (which also incorporates the "backward" that Clandinin and Connelly refer to), I had recently hoped to create an outward environment that was helpful and supportive to my informal mentee (forward) at a high school in central Texas. While we had a positive and productive relationship, my mentee did not complete his first year of teaching; instead, he opted to change careers after three months of teaching.

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) emphasize that "Narrative inquirers are concerned with personal conditions and, at the same time, with social conditions. By personal conditions we mean the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral

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dispositions" (p. 480). By place, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) mean the actual "physical and topological boundaries of place or sequence of places where the inquiry and events take place" (p. 480). This description of the three-dimensional space fits with the interpretivist paradigm that Glesne (2011) describes as "a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever-changing" (p. 8). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) also discuss the term "broadening," in response to general overview questions like "What sort of person are you?" or "What kind of society is it?" (p. 11). While Connelly and Clandinin (1990) state that sometimes these are interesting questions, they are not strictly narrative questions. This requires "burrowing," in essence, rooting out the emotions connected with events and why the subject has "these feelings and what their origins might be" (p. 11). Connelly and Clandinin equate this process with Schafer's (1981) "narrative therapy." Finally, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) discuss "restorying" as a coming about as a person,

> returns to present and future considerations and asks what the meaning of the event is and how he or she might create a new story of self which changes the meaning of the event, its description, and its significance for the larger life story the person may be trying to live (p. 11).

In that vein, I want to help new teachers stay in the profession and guide them through some of the difficulties that commonly arise during the first year of teaching that cause them to quit the profession or migrate to other schools.

4.1.5. Participants

The participants in this study were eight teachers at Gaines High School (pseudonym) in central Texas where I was a teacher for one year. Pseudonyms for the eight teachers, along with their truncated biographies, can be found in Table 1. Seven of the teachers taught grades 9-12 English and one was a Physical Education teacher and baseball coach. Four of the eight participants in my sample of convenience (Creswell, 2007) were not assigned an official mentor at the beginning of their first year of teaching and had to find someone to help them their first year. The other four had mentors assigned to them, but only two fully utilized their assigned mentors. Pseudonyms are used to increase the confidentiality of their responses.

Table 1. Description of study participants

Participant	Race	Gender	Age	High School Position	Years Teaching
Dave	Caucasian	male	mid 30's	In-school Suspension (ISS); head baseball coach; Physical Education	10+
Harper	Caucasian	female	late 40's	Reading; Journalism; Pre-Advanced Placement (Pre-AP) English II	20+
Mark	Caucasian	male	mid 40s	Advanced Placement (AP) English IV; Honors English IV; level leader	10+
Finn	Caucasian	male	mid 40s	Dual Credit English; AP English III	20+
Edwina	Caucasian	female	early 40s	AP English IV; Honors English IV	10+
Diana	Caucasian	female	mid 30's	AP English III; Honors English III; level leader	10+
Sandy	Caucasian	female	late 50s	English I; level leader	25+
Travis	Caucasian	male	late 20's	English II Honors, English II, Assistant Varsity Soccer Coach	≤ 1

- Diana (pseudonym), the department chair and 11th-grade-level leader, taught across the hall from me and had been a teacher for ten years. She is a Caucasian female in her mid 30s and had taught English III for the entirety of her time she had been at the high school. She graduated from Gaines High School (pseudonym), and after finishing her undergraduate and master's degree at a local university, came back to her high school to teach. She stated that she had a very close relationship with her mentor, and her mentor's daughter was even in her English III Honors course. At the end of the year she became and instructional coach for high school English at another local school district in Central Texas.

- Sandy (pseudonym), is a Caucasian female in her mid to late 50s. She began teaching in the late 1980s and then took time off to raise her children. She started teaching 8th-grade English over 25 years ago and has taught in both public and private schools. Sandy most recently came to this high school about 10 years ago and is the English I level leader. A level leader, in this case, not only teaches a full load of classes but also has the added responsibility of designing lessons and implementing curriculum for that particular grade level. This is considered being an instructional coach. The school district had discussed employing instructional coaches full-time, but has determined that the cost of having three instructional coaches for the English department would be cost prohibitive.

- Dave (pseudonym) is a Caucasian male in his mid 30s and is the head baseball coach at Gaines High School. He and I shared in school suspension (ISS) duty during first period during the fall semester. He previously taught for a local junior college and has been teaching high school for the last ten years and enjoys being a physical education teacher and coach.

- Harper (pseudonym) is a Caucasian female in her late 40s who teaches reading, journalism, and Pre-Advanced Placement (Pre-AP) English II. She did not have a mentor for her first year of teaching and had to get help from other teachers near her classroom. She has been a teacher for 22 years but took some time off to raise her children. She was also an instructional coach and helped me to get acclimated to the school my first few weeks of school. Harper has always taught at the high school level and taught for the high school that she graduated from as well.

- Mark (pseudonym) teaches Advanced Placement (AP) English IV and Honors English IV. He is a Caucasian male in his early 40s and has been a teacher at the high school for about ten years. He also did not have a mentor his first year of teaching and had to make do with asking questions of his colleagues to glean information. He received his bachelor's, master's, and teaching licensure from a local university, but had to relocate to East Texas for his first teaching position. He spent two years in Jepson ISD (pseudonym), and then was employed at Gaines High School.

- Finn (pseudonym) is a Caucasian male in his mid 40s who taught for Benford (pseudonym) Independent School District (BISD) his first year in 1998-1999. He had no official mentor his first year of teaching; however, his student teaching mentor often checked up on him throughout the year. He and his wife moved to Arizona after his first year, and he taught in a school district there for two years. He and his wife returned to Texas where he began teaching dual credit English and AP English III at Gaines High School.

- Edwina (pseudonym) is a Caucasian female in her early 40s. She started as a substitute teacher in Benford (pseudonym) ISD before getting a job at one of the elementary schools teaching Kindergarten and then third grade. Edwina had a career in radio and marketing before she began teaching, but realized that she wanted to spend more time with her children. She has her master's degree in Gifted and Talented Education, and she felt like Gifted and Talented students in our school district were underserved. She has been teaching AP and Honors English IV for the last two years at the high school.

- Travis (pseudonym) is a Caucasian male in his late 20s. His undergraduate degree was in History, and he initially wanted to be a History teacher at the high school level. He started his teaching career as a long-term substitute teacher in a school district south of Houston, Texas. He received his teaching certificate by way of an online alternative certification program, and taught English II, English II Honors, and was also the assistant varsity soccer coach at Gaines High School (pseudonym). He was assigned an official mentor at the beginning of the school

year, but did not utilize him. His mentor was the swimming coach and had very

little time for Travis; Instead, I informally mentored Travis through his first few

months at the school. Because of the mounting costs of living, paying for his

alternative certificate, and, growing pressure to teach and coach Travis

increasingly became more frustrated, and eventually decided to take a position

with an oil company in West Texas.

4.1.6. Conceptual Framework

4.1.1.2. Experience

Each of the experiences that I have had, has helped to shape me as a mentor and

educator of pre-service teachers. Indeed, if I had not had ineffective mentors throughout

my teaching career, I might not have realized how fundamentally important they really

are to novice teachers. To that end, each of us has a story to tell about our experiences

in teaching. Dewey (1934/1997) believed that experience was both social and personal,

and that "experiences grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further

experiences" (p. 2). Many of us have traumatic experiences at the beginning of our

careers that shake us at the core of our professional identities. My less-than-productive

misadventures in teaching consistently revolved around other teachers and

administrators and most often were the result of miscommunications. Could an effective

mentor have steered me through some of the issues that I had? Most likely, but I will

never know for sure. I do know that the journey in search of a willing mentor shaped

who I am as a teacher and mentor. Discovering a mentor with which one finds a

personal connection is part of coming to understand oneself as a professional educator.

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Indeed, I now know that I am unwilling to allow a new teacher to struggle without guidance and am more than willing to offer a helping hand. Even though most of the teachers I interviewed would not consider being a formal mentor, they readily assisted other teachers in their department without hesitation. The real reluctance to mentor others arose when they were administratively assigned to a person sight-unseen.

4.1.1.3. Story

My participant teachers' stories allow me to retell and re-story my own experiences and the experiences of others in my circle of knowledge. According to Adams, Ellis, and Holman-Jones (2014), the personal meaning genre of research focuses on

> artistic and analytic demonstrations of how we come to know, name, and interpret personal and cultural experience. We use our experience to engage ourselves, others, culture(s), politics, and social research…. we confront the tension between insider and outsider perspectives, between social practice and social constraint. (p. 1)

As I reflect on my own experiences, I must believe that my experiences of being mentored and mentoring others is an optimal place to begin a narrative. Ellis and Bochner (2000) state that the "researcher's own memories of experience illuminate and allow access to the sub-culture under study" (p. 735). As a novice educator, I did not feel like I was learning something that I could pass on to other teachers, however, when I became a pre-service teacher educator, I felt that my experiences (both positive and negative) could help instruct the practice of future teachers; even if it was to serve as an

example of what not to do. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) point out, however, that "stories and their meaning shift and change over time" (p. 9), and over time each one of the stories that I tell changes my viewpoint on my teaching practice. Indeed, I often reflect on how my reactions then to issues could have exacerbated situations, and how I could now handle the same situation today with aplomb. Maturity and time have given me the space to understand the need for caring and supportive mentors. Lamott (2018) states that stories themselves are "mirrors, mentors, guide dogs…they free us from hubris…and tunnel vision…" (p. 98). Even more importantly, "they hold us together" by teaching us "what is important about life, why we are here and how it is best to behave, and that inside us, we have access to memories…observations…imagination." In a nutshell, stories provide "all that we need to come through…" (Lamott, 2018, p. 179). These teacher's stories of mentoring and being mentored coincide with my own experiences as a beginning teacher.

4.1.7. Teachers' Mentoring Stories

I received permission from the school district and my principal to conduct interviews of the eight teachers on campus. I emailed the entire high school and volunteers came from my department, and Dave (pseudonym) who I worked with in In School Suspension (ISS). I asked 10 mentoring questions and 10 questions about being mentored, and each interview lasted approximately 25 minutes. For the most part they all agreed that mentoring was important for new teachers, but most of them were reluctant to say they would offer to be a mentor because of the extra work that would be required. Only Sandy said that she would most definitely mentor a new teacher.

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Table 2. Analysis of participant responses

Theme	Code	Response
Finding a mentor	Searching	"I've never had an official mentor teacher." "There wasn't an official mentor" "nobody officially assigned to me"
Baptism by fire	Stress Overwhelmed	"So a lot of it was just baptism by fire" " So my first year of teaching I was thrown right into teaching." "It was one of the most polarizing experience of my life." "It was just OK here's your assignments and here are the teachers that that can answer your question".
Found Mentor	Support Listening Venting	"She provided me with mental, emotional, material, and financial support many times throughout the school year". "Basically, just making sure that I knew where to go and what and what I needed and OK you need this or you're having this discipline issue talk to this person here".
Mentoring others	Informal Collaborative	"Like I have a handle on it I have a handle on it to such a degree that I'm mentoring Edwina (pseudonym) across the hallway on how to do it (AP English IV)". "Yeah I was somewhat of a mentor" "So I was kind of responsible for saying hey here's what AP is all about
Reasons not to mentor	No time Extra responsibility	"Well sometimes I just don't want to make the availability" "So just the stress of being a teacher on top of the stress of being a mentor just gives me the heebie jeebies"

Of the eight participants, four were assigned mentors at the beginning of their first year of teaching in public school, however, of those four, only two fully utilized and formed a bond with their assigned mentor teacher. The remaining five were left to find their own mentors on their own time throughout their first years.

4.1.1.3.1. Sandy

When Sandy (pseudonym) began teaching eighth grade English, she was not assigned a mentor, nor did the state of Texas have a policy in the 1980's about new teachers needing a mentor during their first year. She was left to find someone who would be available to help her. She talked about her school being a small one, and there was one other English teacher, but in her case she utilized the Mathematics teacher next door to her.

> **Sandy:** I was desperate, and I was lucky in that the teacher who taught next door to me, who was a math teacher, helped me, and not I mean, not with the English stuff at all, but she fully mentored me through the whole process of being a first year teacher. And, you know, the ins and outs of that particular school and all that kind of thing and I don't know what I would have done without her.

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She and her informal mentor forged a gradual relationship during the passing periods and while standing in the halls every day. Sandy did not think that she would have made it through her first year of teaching had it not been for the kindness of the teacher next door. As a result, Sandy firmly believes in the necessity of mentor teachers, whether formal or otherwise, for new teachers and makes herself available to all new teachers in her department. I found her particularly helpful when I started at Gaines High School (pseudonym), because I was unsure about who to ask questions of. She came down to my classroom before the first day of school to check on me and to make sure that I knew where everything was. Throughout the year, she periodically stopped by to check in and make sure that I was adjusting and to let me voice any concerns that I was having. As the freshman English I level leader, she made sure that all of her teachers were well equipped to teach each unit, and had a full understanding of what the students were supposed to learn from the units. I did not teach freshman English, however, my neighbor did, and Sandy was available frequently to talk to the teacher next door. She did not have to stop in and check on me, but she did. I asked her if her mentor was a factor in her remaining a teacher.

> **Erin:** Was your mentor a factor in your decision to remain in the teaching field and why or why not?
>
> **Sandy:** Yes, because she was always so positive about what she was doing and so positive about my ability to do it to you know I mean she'd made me feel like this was something that you know I could handle and that kind of thing.

She had several mentoring experiences over the last 25 years of teaching, both formal and informal. Sandy's most positive experience being a mentor was with a teacher who was not even on the same campus.

> **Sandy**: For instance, the most successful informal one I had was when I taught in Hereford (pseudonym), and she [the mentee] didn't even teach at the same school I did. I was at the high school she was at the junior high which was directly behind our high school. But she and I both had horses in the same pasture and randomly enough we would meet often. And what I thought was random for a long time you know as we were feeding horses and we'd talk school stuff and it was not until the end of the year that she finally admitted to me that she would watch from my car and come down and feed her horse so she could talk to me about things.

4.1.1.3.2. Mark

Mark (pseudonym), had quite a stressful experience his first year of teaching. He received his bachelor's, master's, and teaching licensure from a local university, but had to relocate to East Texas for his first teaching position. He explained to me that he did not relocate his family, but instead went to live with his sister and her husband. He stayed in Jepsen (pseudonym) ISD for two years before moving back with his family. He was not assigned a mentor his first year and managed to get by with little- to-no help from any of his colleagues around him. He had this to say about his first year of teaching:

> **Mark**: It was everything that you would expect for a first year and more. They gave me entirely too many students. I had classroom teaching instruction, but no observation, or minimal observation hours at this point, minimal time in an actual classroom. So, a lot of it was just baptism by fire.

Mark considered his first experience in a classroom a "baptism by fire" which I have found to be a common metaphor for novice teaching. He did not form lasting relationships in Jepson ISD; however, when he was employed at Gaines High School (pseudonym) he seemed to form meaningful bonds with his new colleagues. He had no official mentor when he first arrived at GHS, but, at that point, was more willing to ask for assistance.

> **Mark**: It was like, hey, this is your department. These people will help you if you need it. You have to ask for it. Generally, let them know.

Mark had also ventured out to assist me during my first year at Gaines High School. At the beginning of the year he did not appear overly friendly and presented himself as a gruff, stoic, no-nonsense type of teacher, but as the year progressed, and I had more questions that needed answering, he began to warm up to me. I had planned on staying a second year at the high school; however, I think Mark suspected that I would only last one year. He was not wrong. Beginning in January of 2019, he made himself more available to me and provided me with extra materials to use in my classroom. By that time, I had shown that I had a genuine interest in the subject matter, and was there to help students, and he was more willing to help. Mark felt that it was better that he had

not had a mentor at the beginning of his career, but preferred the relationships that he naturally formed with his co-workers.

> **Mark**: But with or without a direct mentor I don't feel like I don't have somebody saying, "Oh well that's terrible". That's a bad idea. I have people I can bounce things off to make things better. But I would say that. Yeah. The fact that I haven't had one because I don't know any better. Is probably part of the reason I've been able to stay.

4.1.1.3.3. Diana

Diana (pseudonym), on the other hand, had an amazing first year of school. She bonded immediately with her mentor, Barbara (pseudonym), and they became quick friends. During her first year of teaching she was also finishing her Master's degree in Education from a local land grant university. Diana had been concerned about her job prospects because when she began teaching in 2008, school districts around Texas had been cutting jobs due to a recession. Instead, she was offered a position at Gaines High School, which she had graduated from several years earlier. She was to teach English III and English III Honors, and her mentor, Barbara, taught next door to her. Diana had struck a trifecta of good luck; Not only did her mentor teach the same subject, but they had the same planning periods and had close proximity to one another as well.

> **Diana**: So, I would go to her classroom and watch her teach before I taught the lesson that day. But I think more than anything I learned from her watching her things like classroom management and like things like how to remember to tell them certain things like "oh don't forget you have this coming up later in the

week". And she helped me I think avoid making a lot mistakes probably or just like missing stuff like I wouldn't have known to say [or do].

As I taught both English III and English IV, Diana made herself immediately available to me for questions and lesson planning. Not only was Diana the department chair, but she was also the English III level leader. Each grade and subject area had a level leader; I was never quite sure what a level leader did, but they functioned as what I would consider an instructional coach role in addition to having a full load of classes. Mark (pseudonym) was the level leader for English IV, Harper (pseudonym) was the level leader for English II, and Sandy (pseudonym) was the level leader for English I. They created the lesson plans and PowerPoint presentations for each days' lesson and distributed them among the rest of the teachers to use as they saw fit. Diana would often check on me, as we were right across the hall from one another, and make sure that I was adjusting well to my new environment. At that point, I had been out of public education for at least 10 years. I will say that it was quite an adjustment going from teaching pre-service teachers to high school juniors and seniors.

Diana had quite a close relationship with her mentor Barbara (pseudonym) and described their relationship in this way:

> **Diana**: She kind of took to me very quickly and I to her. We're still very close. I think of her as like a second mother. Basically, she not only helped me with the teaching stuff but also made me feel comfortable and accepted. She very much made me feel like I knew what I was doing; that I had something to contribute and it wasn't just you know, her way or the highway kind of deal. She was a real

partner and in that sense I think she really gave me a voice and the confidence to

know that I could do it [teach].

When I asked Diana if she stayed in teaching because of her mentor she answered:

Diana: Absolutely. She [Barbara] came to teaching late in life. Not super late,

but later I guess, she's very open with me about her decision to become a teacher

and what she was passionate about. And her passion her dedication inspired me.

Diana was one of the teachers who was willing to be a mentor to others, but cited the

number of committees she was on and her level leader and department chair

responsibilities as barriers to mentoring a novice teacher. She did not believe that she

would be a poor mentor, just that she did not think that she would be able to devote the

kind of time that her mentor had for her to a new teacher. She agreed that mentoring was

vital for new teachers and believed that it was important for novices to have support.

4.1.1.3.4. Edwina

Edwina (pseudonym) took a similar path to mine to become a teacher. She

started off in radio marketing and decided later that she wanted to be able to spend more

time with her children. She opted for alternative certification through her local regional

education service center. Edwina (pseudonym) started off as a long-term substitute

kindergarten teacher in Benford (pseudonym) ISD. Her mentor was readily available to

her and was a constant support for her.

Edwina: She was amazing. So, I would I would ask her probably three times a

day; Like can you give me some advice? What am I doing wrong? I couldn't

have asked for a better person to help me with the resources. But you know she

was also really encouraging on how to make it my own. But I contacted her on the weekends in the evenings all of you and she was like that she would she wanted to help. She was at the same school for 40 years and she wanted to leave behind a teaching staff that you know could carry on.

Often new teachers find a disconnect with their ideal vision of teaching and the reality of teaching (Craig, 2014). This was especially true for Edwina and having a mentor that was supportive seemed to alleviate most of the frustration and anxiety.

Edwina: Well I really learned that it was a lot different than what I expected. My first year I did not realize all of the extra work that I needed to do prep wise. And when you teach kindergarten I think there is a thought that you know it's pretty easy and laid back and you know you're just gonna cut and color all day. And so she helped me with prep work. There was a lot of issues because we were at a low socio-economic school without a lot of parent participation and there were some issues where I had to actually call CPS [Child Protective Services] that year and she would she help me get through that.

Edwina came to discover that the preparation for elementary school students far exceeded that of the preparation needed for high school students and explained that she most likely would not have returned for a second year had it not been for her mentor.

Edwina: If I didn't have somebody as patient as her I probably wouldn't have come back for a second year.

She said that she made twice as much money in advertising, but had decided to stay in teaching because she felt like she was helping her students. She also said that money

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was not a factor in her decision, as her husband made enough money for her to stay home if she desired. Edwina also was hesitant to become a mentor teacher. She had mentored a student teacher five years earlier, and said that the amount of time and work that she needed to put in was difficult to manage with her personal life. As her mentor had been available nights and weekends, she did not have as much spare time to devote to the student teacher. Edwina was also conflict avoidant and when her student teacher said something inappropriate to a third grade student, which got back to the parent, she was very uncomfortable in being forced to correct her.

4.1.1.3.5. *Finn*

Finn and I are the same age and have approximately the same number of years of experience in teaching. He started his career in 1998, while I started mine in 1997. His first teaching position was in Benford (pseudonym) ISD at Benford High School (pseudonym) teaching on level juniors and freshman who were too old be at the ninth grade campus, but had yet to pass English I. He did not have an assigned mentor teacher his first year in the district, however, the teacher that he had student taught under was on the same campus and he turned to her on several occasions.

> **Finn:** So, she would be the one that I talked to about my classes and how things were going. She would occasionally check in with me and so she was kind of my go between in the department between what was going on in my class and department and the department head.

He spent one year in Benford High School before he moved to Arizona with his wife. Finn taught in Arizona for two years, but said that he did not have a mentor teacher there

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either. He was more comfortable at that point with asking questions of his colleagues. As the only male in the Benford High School (pseudonym) English department, he said that it was a comfort to be able to talk to someone he already knew.

> **Finn:** She was kind of just an ear to bend there. I think that was probably the most important for me I needed somebody to talk to, and I was the only male in the English department there. So, having that familiarity with her helped me.

He turned to his mentor for general advice on teaching and classroom management strategies. The older freshmen were a particularly difficult challenge as they were not interested in the traditional English I assignments. With a little bit of help from his informal mentor he was able to find novels that would interest the students. He now teaches the dual credit English courses for Gaines High School, and actually cannot think of anything else that he would rather do.

> **Finn**: And there was a moment where I was teaching all the AP class English through junior AP classes, and all my dual classes all by myself . I was just like "I don't have to talk to anybody", and I get to decide what I'm going to do with these classes on my own.

Finn's main issue with being a mentor was not wanting to push his style of teaching on anyone. What worked for him, he said, might not work for a new teacher. He was happy to answer questions and direct novice teachers, but as for being a mentor in an official capacity, he was not particularly interested. Finn agreed that mentoring new teachers was a necessity, however, the mentor teachers should be given some allowances in the form of extra off time and a stipend.

4.1.1.3.6. Dave

The interview with Dave (pseudonym) was quite short, as he was not one for over-sharing. His interview lasted approximately ten minutes. I was told later by Harper, that ten minutes of him talking was a big deal. Dave originated from Canada, and moved to Nebraska to attend college. He graduated with a bachelor's and a master's degree in Physical Education (PE.). He met his wife and they moved to Texas where he went on to teach P.E. at a local junior college for five years. He also received his teaching certificate through alternative certification in Texas, but he had technically been a teacher at the junior college level, and he was not "new" to teaching. His mentor was the chair of the Physical Education department, but she was never actually assigned to him. He had been familiar with lesson planning, but he had very little experience with problem students in his classes. She gave him some advice about how to handle these students and how to manage his time as head baseball coach. Dave said that his mentor was not a factor in his staying in the teaching field, but rather,

> **Dave:** I enjoy it. I like working with the kids. I like what I teach. I like to be active and get them active and give them something that they wouldn't normally do. Kids don't just go out and play anymore. So, getting them active is different for them and they find out it's actually kind of fun.

He said that he had not had the opportunity to mentor because he really did not have time to mentor a novice teacher, and all of the coaches seemed to help each other out anyway. Dave commented that all of the coaches at Gaines High School were very

helpful, and there was always someone that would be available to answer new teacher's questions.

4.1.1.3.7. *Harper*

Harper (pseudonym) was a brand-new college graduate of 22 when she became a teacher at her old high school. She was barely older than her students, and many of her teachers were still employed at the high school. She was also not given a mentor, but found mentors in her previous teachers.

> **Harper:** The only influence I had there was the fact that I had graduated from that high school and so I knew so many of the teachers and so there was there wasn't an official mentor. But there were plenty of teachers there with whom I felt comfortable enough to go and say, you know, how can you help me with this or what should I do in this situation…

Harper taught sophomore English her first year and was the yearbook sponsor. She said that she did not remember anyone coming around to check on her, but she would seek out a teacher if she needed help. She recalled making her own lesson plans for her classes, but she felt like the yearbook representative had also been a mentor to her. The yearbook sponsor the year before Harper arrived had apparently made a mess of things to the extent that the high school editor had been allowed to sit in on her interview. Harper agreed to take on the yearbook, but admitted that she knew next to nothing about putting a yearbook together. The yearbook representative from the publishing company helped Harper through the year.

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> **Harper:** For the yearbook stuff that I did, that was the really interesting thing. We had a really great guy who was my mentor, the yearbook representative from the publishing company who came and met me, and I said I know zero, and so he me pretty much taught me all of the things that I needed to know about how that process worked.

Harper came from a long line of teachers in her family which is why her she knew that she was going to be a teacher. Her grandmother and father were both teachers in South Carolina and Harper knew she loved teaching. Harper took some time off while her children were young, but came back to teach high school. She, like Edwina, did not need to have a job to survive, but said,

> **Harper:** I've been very lucky to be able to teach at the level, at the grade level and the subject matter that I really, really love. I do not need a paycheck. I need this work. Because I love it. And I want to be a teacher because I want to be here but not because I have to be here right now.

Like many of her colleagues, Harper agreed that novice teachers needed to be mentored throughout their first years. She also commented on the many factors that prevent veteran teachers from being effective mentors.

> **Harper:** One thing is being a full time teacher and trying to mentor other teachers. It's a really hard thing to do. Because your spare time and other teacher's spare time is limited. I would have to find ways to do the things that I needed to do during my conference period periods. But at the same time go and check on new teachers or new faculty. To see if they were OK. To see what they

needed. But helping people figure out what they need, why things aren't good, or that they aren't going well and helping someone realize that this is not going the way you really need it to be going. And then addressing it in that way because at that point that person is up to here. [Motions over her head]

This sentiment seems to be common among veteran teachers. They mostly all agreed that novice teachers need mentors; however, they do not feel they have the time or energy to be an effective one. Many experienced teachers would like to be mentors, but their other responsibilities seem to prohibit such an endeavor.

4.1.1.3.8. Travis

I met Travis (pseudonym) at the new teacher in-service for Gaines High School (pseudonym) in August of 2018. He would be teaching AP and Honors sophomore English and was getting his teaching certificate through an online alternative certification program. He had been substituting in a school district south of Houston, for the spring semester and had gotten a job offer to teach sophomore English and be the Assistant Varsity Soccer coach at Gaines High School (pseudonym). He seemed excited to be part of the English department and was even more excited about being a soccer coach. Travis had a mentor assigned to him at the beginning of the year, a fellow coach and 10th grade Honors English teacher. His mentor, Lance (pseudonym) was the head swimming coach, and he had been teaching about 18 or 19 years my first year at Gaines High School. However, Travis was a travelling teacher with no classroom of his own. He had been given a rolling cart for his computer and papers, but he had to travel to other teachers' classrooms during their planning periods to teach his classes. This

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situation was less than ideal for Travis (a brand-new teacher), and for the other teachers whose classrooms he was using. The week before school started, Travis was having a difficult time finding a place to store his cart before school and when he was coaching soccer. His mentor teacher had no suggestions for him, as his classroom was full and could not accommodate the cart. I overheard Travis bemoaning his situation to another new teacher, and I suggested that he could leave his cart in my room because it was on the way to and from the other classrooms in which he taught. For a brand-new teacher, I could see how not having a permanent classroom in which to teach could be a problem. My classroom was spacious, as I had taken out several bookshelves from the previous teacher, and he was able to store his cart in my room when it was not in use. After the first three weeks of school, he began spending his planning period in my classroom observing how I taught and interacted with my students. On several occasions he had an insight about something I was teaching, and I allowed him to teach the seniors in that class. I had been given an extended planning period, so I was able to visit Travis in his classroom to observe how he was doing frequently. We were able to have lunch almost every day and at this point, I became his "unofficial" mentor. We eventually found a classroom for Travis down by the cafeteria by the end of September.

Several weeks into the school year, Travis became increasingly overwhelmed with his workload and other responsibilities that he began to talk about quitting. He felt disrespected by the administration because they had asked him to complete several hours of online training. The problem with this was that he, nor I, had access to the online training and would have to wait for an administrator to grant access. He became

frustrated at the lack of attention being given to the "new hires" as it seemed that the administration was not aware that we were already overtaxed at that point, some five weeks after the semester had begun. These online trainings had been completed over the summer by the rest of the staff. As a veteran teacher, I have become used to these types of frustrations, and I tried to explain to Travis, that we would be given access at some point and that the administration would not count anything against us for not having the training completed at a particular time. Travis had this to say about his first few months of teaching,

> **Travis:** It was one of the most polarizing experience of my life. On one hand it was one of the most enjoyable periods of my professional career, getting to spend time with young adults helping them navigate daily life in high school, mentoring the students, and making a great friend in my own personal mentor. On the other hand, I was incredibly stressed out from the massive workload, the low pay, and the pressures and expectations placed on first year teachers by the district and administration.

Travis did not stay long with the district; he resigned in November of 2018 to take a position in the oil field. In his words, his "bills outweighed his paychecks". I was very disappointed when Travis decided to leave, mostly because I felt that I had failed him in some way. However, when I interviewed him later he had a different view.

> **Erin:** Was your mentor a factor in your decision to remain in the teaching field? Why or why not?

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Travis: Had I remained in the teaching field, you would have been a factor, you were certainly a factor in me staying for as long as I did. Having you as my mentor teacher made coming to work every day and not feel miserable. Knowing I had a mentor who was also my friend, who understood what it was like to be a new teacher, and who did everything she could to make sure a first year teacher was able to be present and attentive to their students was incredibly helpful and important to my experience as a new teacher. Without you, I would have felt like I was on an island, desolate and isolated, regretting my decision to teach altogether.

I was glad to know that I had been such a significant influence during his time at Gaines High School. I thought I had failed Travis, but in actuality I had not. Travis stayed in the oil field four months and then moved on to a marketing position in Austin, Texas. We have kept in touch, and he told me later that if it had not been for the low pay, he would have stayed in the teaching field. He also told me that he would have liked to have been a mentor to a new teacher so that he could have offered the same support and acceptance that I had given to him.

4.1.8. Unpacking the Stories of Mentoring

These shared experiences of teachers and their mentoring experiences throughout their careers show the necessity of mentors for novice teachers. I thought once that my experiences were unique, and that I was the only teacher who was suffering. The metaphors of "drowning" and "baptism by fire" are common among teachers and reflect the increasing number of responsibilities teachers are given. It is sometimes difficult for

veteran teachers to manage the everyday stress of being responsible for 25 or more students a day, let alone a novice teacher who has had little to no practice managing a classroom. Wang and Odell (2002) discuss the requirements that many districts were implementing in the early 2000s that included linking district teacher induction and mentorship programs with national professional teaching standards. The first of four obligations that they discuss for mentors include mentors needing to be able to support novice teachers "in posing problems for current teaching practice, uncovering assumptions underlying current practice, and constructing and reconstructing the curriculum and teaching practice in the unique context of teaching" (p. 489).   The second and third responsibilities for mentors, according to Wang and Odell (2002), involve understanding the subject matter on a deeper level and helping novice teachers engage students of multiple ability levels. Mentor teachers are expected to have a "deep understanding of the relationship between principled knowledge and teaching practice and to help novice teachers develop similar understandings" (p. 489). Finally, mentors should not just deliver information to the novice teacher but work collaboratively with them to discover effective teaching practices (p. 490).

I have been a teacher for over 20 years and in that span of time, I have spoken to hundreds of educators, both novice and veteran. In that time, no one that I have spoken to had completed a mentoring program. This is not to say that mentoring programs do not exist, what I am saying is that no one I have spoken to has ever heard of a program let alone completed one. Hobson and Malderez (2013) discuss the need for proper training of mentor teachers because mentoring has been "found to play an important role

in the acculturation of beginner teachers, helping them to understand and adapt to the norms, standards, and expectations associated with teaching in general and the specific schools in which they find themselves (p. 4). The only prior training that I had for being a mentor was the number of years that I had been teaching and knowing that I did not want others to feel as helpless and abandoned as I had felt with my mentors. These feelings have propelled me to search for a mentoring program that offers new teachers support and guidance rather than neglect and avoidance. Researchers (Wang & Odell, 2002; Hobson & Malderez, 2013; Bressman, Winter & Efron, 2018; Izadinia, 2015) from around the globe have discussed the need for mentor teachers time and again. The real issue is finding veteran teachers who are willing to be mentors and providing them with the support they need to be effective mentors to novice teachers.

4.1.9. Limitations

There were some limitations to this particular study, however. Gaines High School (pseudonym) is located in a primarily white, upper middle-class community two hours northwest of Houston, Texas. According to the Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) for 2017-2018, there were 711,786 teachers employed in school districts across the state of Texas (p.21). Of these teachers, only 10.4% of teachers were African-American, 27.2 % Hispanic, and 58.9% were Caucasian. Asian teachers only make up 1.6% of the teaching population in Texas. In contrast to Houston Independent School District, which has a teacher population of 36% African-American, 28.8% Hispanic, and only 27.9% Caucasian (TAPR: Houston ISD, 2017-2018, p.23), the suburban school district that I taught in was predominately white. Out of 1,845 teachers employed in the

district, 84.6% were Caucasian, with only 10.2% being Hispanic, and 3.8% African-American (TAPR: Gaines High School (pseudonym), 2017-2018, p.19).   My sample of teachers was, for the most part, a sample of convenience made up of the teachers in my English department and one other with which I supervised ISS with daily. The teacher population in my sample, however, was entirely reflective of the small Texas city and representative of those who typically teach upper level English courses. Had I conducted this study in a more urban populated area, I believe my sample would have represented a more diverse population of teachers of varying ethnic backgrounds.

4.1.10. Conclusion

Many teachers, like Diana and Edwina, have assigned mentors that are kind and supportive, but all too often, novice teachers are left to find a mentor on their own who is willing to answer the repetitive and seemingly idiotic questions that new teachers often have. Where is the copy machine? What is my copy code number? How do I fill out this request form? How do I contact maintenance, IT, surplus, etc.? How do I input grades? New teachers have all of these questions and many more, and even after the whirlwind campus induction, there are even more questions to be answered. To veteran teachers, the answers have been discovered long ago. They know how to write lesson plans, they know the copy code number, and they know how to use Eduphoria to contact maintenance, IT, and surplus. These veterans have taken all of the professional development needed to begin the school year. However, many of them refuse to volunteer to be a formal mentor to these novice educators because of the extra time and effort that is needed to instruct them.

Mentor teachers should be offered incentives for taking on the extra workload. This could take the form of a stipend or a lighter class load because of the work required to train a new teacher. Novice teachers also need a lighter load so that they can have more time to observe veteran teachers in their classrooms. Just because one has graduated from university and started a teaching position does not mean that learning is over. Indeed, in teaching, the learning has just begun. Induction to the teaching field should not be painful, or cause novice teachers to believe that they have made the wrong choice in careers. As Travis observed, "Without my mentor, I would have felt like I was on an island, desolate and isolated, regretting my decision to teach altogether". Medical doctors can spend up to seven years in residency at a hospital honing their skills as physicians. While teaching a class of fourth graders is not a life or death situation, as is the case with medical doctors, it can be, however, the life or death of someone's career if they are not properly prepared. An inept teacher can cause a child to create negative connotations towards learning and school. New teachers are expected to take control of a classroom of 25 or more students and teach grade level subject matter to a diverse population with only four years of college education and limited field experience. Novice teachers need the instruction from veteran teachers to understand the nuances of the everyday teaching profession, which can include time management, teaching diverse populations, resolving conflicts, and pedagogy.

Research has shown that forty to fifty percent of teachers leave teaching before their fifth year and that attrition rate rises to 75% in rural and urban schools (Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll & Perda, 2012). The implications of this research can be utilized by

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school districts nationally and internationally as mentors are a large part of new teacher induction programs. It is in the best interest of all school districts, no matter where they may be located, to employ and retain novice teachers. School districts and campuses need to provide supportive and nurturing mentoring experiences for new teachers so that they will continue to learn and grow in their profession. Not only do we need to educate new teachers, but we need to prepare new teachers on how find a mentor and how to be a mentor as well. All of the teachers that I interviewed, except one (Sandy), were hesitant to be a mentor to a new teacher. They were content to offer advice occasionally but did not want to be saddled with the responsibility of instructing a new teacher. Becoming a professional, competent educator does not happen overnight, or even in a year; It takes many years of practice and refinement. The concept of teaching as a strand of pearls that veteran teachers accumulate over the years and the imparting of those pearls of wisdom to novice teachers seems apropos in this situation. Craig, You, and Oh (2017) discuss this metaphor and how veteran teacher, Helen, passed her knowledge down to her informal mentee J.D. Each new lesson that Helen helped J.D. create became a pearl on his strand of teaching experiences; a valuable piece of knowledge to be used in the future. A precious lesson learned, and each one of the pearls could be polished or refined to enhance its beauty at a later time if necessary. We consider pearls to be valuable, and we should also consider the knowledge that veteran teachers possess to be just as valuable a commodity. All too often we see mentor teachers maintaining a full class load of students and the paperwork associated with those students, on top of being asked to mentor a new teacher. This is not the way to treat a valuable resource and changes

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should be enacted to reflect the investment into preparing, inducting and sustaining new teachers into to the field of education.

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5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Mentoring Novice Teachers

Mentor teachers are an integral part of a novice teachers' induction into the field of education as new teachers face increasing challenges throughout their induction years (first five years). Effective mentoring can help to alleviate some of the stress that these novice teachers encounter on a regular basis. Studies (Darling-Hammond, 2003, 2010; Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014; Izadinia, 2015) have shown that new teacher retention is influenced by not only salaries, working conditions, and teacher preparation, but also by mentoring and support during the first years. Because of their importance, the State of Texas requires that every new teacher, with less than two years of experience, must be assigned a mentor in the same subject, and ideally with the same planning periods. Furthermore, in the state of Texas, the Texas Education Code §21.458 states that mentor teachers should have at least three years of teaching experience, have a documented record of success with students, and teach the same subject matter as the novice teacher. The code also states that the prospective mentor should also complete a mentoring preparation course approved by the state. Other states, including California, Florida, New York, Oklahoma, and Washington have specific sections in their state education codes for the use of mentors to induct novice teachers into the teaching field. Indeed, most states have identified the need for mentor teachers and require districts to provide mentors for new teachers.

Despite the requirement that these states have for beginning teachers to have mentors, pairing mentors and mentees can often be difficult. In some cases, the mentor and mentee have differing personalities, or the mentor may have been "assigned" to be a mentor without being asked. Regardless, each mentor/mentee relationship is unique. All too often, novice teachers must contend with being alone and unsupported their first year of teaching. For some new teachers, it seems as if they are thrust into an authority position for which they have not been sufficiently prepared for. New teachers often resign before they have acquired the necessary coping skills to be an effective classroom teacher. The lack of an experienced and supportive mentor can also exacerbate novice teacher frustrations with the teaching profession which may cause them to find employment at other schools or even in other industries. Teachers, novice or otherwise, need to be in a supportive and nurturing environment if they are to thrive and flourish. This support system does not always have to be in the form of a single mentor, however. Indeed, a "community" of faculty can offer a much wider range of assistance to a neophyte teacher, and share the mentoring responsibility load (Meyer, 2002). This community of learning may offer novice teachers a variety of options when dealing with classroom dilemmas, such as classroom management, lesson planning, and isolation rather than depending on the "good will" of a single mentor (Meyer, 2002). As a beginning teacher, I was not afforded a mentor that was interested in mentoring me. I spent the first several years of my teaching career struggling to find someone willing to help me hone my craft as a teacher. More often than not, I was left to learn from my own mistakes. Later in my career, I realized that it was important for teachers to have

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someone to show them the way, no matter how many years of teaching they had. I now understand that my own mentoring experiences have shaped who I am today as a teacher and mentor.

As I have recounted, my first year of teaching was one of the most stressful and frustrating experiences of my life primarily because I had not completed a traditional teacher preparation program. Instead, I took the alternative certification route. Reflecting back on my own experiences, I was not ready for a real classroom full of real children. I came to the teaching profession by way of alternative certification. Unlike a traditional teacher preparation program lodged in a university, my alternative certification training provided by a Regional Education Service Center did not allow for observation of experienced teachers or practice teaching in low stakes situations. I did not have the usual methods courses that prepared most pre-service teachers for their first jobs in teaching. Rather, I had several crash courses over a few weeks in theory and pedagogy and then was hired by a large Houston area school district in 1997. I was not able to student teach before I was assigned a classroom of my own; my student teacher practicum was my first year of actual teaching.

5.1.1. New Teacher Induction and Mentoring

My first year of teaching was one of the most miserable and frustrating years of my life. My assigned mentor had not been asked to be a mentor by the principal of the school, but rather told she would be one, and subsequently, there was a great deal of resentment toward me. She explained to me in no uncertain terms that she was too busy to help me and that I would be on my own. New teacher induction programs can help

alleviate some of the pressure for new teachers and help novices to navigate the waters of their first years of teaching. As I have discovered, new teacher induction programs vary from district-to-district and school-to-school. New teacher induction takes place the first year that a novice educator teaches in the field. There are several induction practices that school districts employ to prepare their beginning teachers for that first year in the school system that includes professional development and socialization to the district and campus. In fact, the first few years of teaching can be the most difficult years that a new teacher faces in their career. Some teachers are able to weather their induction year of teaching with fairly positive experiences, while many do not make it past the first year of teaching and either transfer to another school or quit altogether. This can cause problems for districts as they can expend between $10,000 to $20,000 training and preparing new teachers to work in their districts (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page and Marinell, 2017). Novice teachers claim that not only campus culture is a deciding factor in their decision to leave, but also classroom management, motivating students, communicating with parents, and teaching students at different levels (Anthony, Gimbert, Luke & Hurt, 2019). Many new teacher induction programs include a number of support systems for novice teachers that can include district professional development, a mentor teacher, teacher leaders, and campus administrative support systems. Papay et al. (2017) report that 55% of novice teachers in urban school districts leave within five years "and 70% leave their school" depending on the district (p. 437). Researchers have documented the importance of novice teachers having mentors and that effective mentoring strategies can impact teacher retention (Ronfeldt &

McQueen, 2017; Izadinia, 2015). New teachers need several years to hone their craft and effective mentors can provide a safety net for novice teachers to experiment with new teaching strategies (Hong, 2012). New teachers, whether they are new to the content, campus, grade level or teaching in general, are essential resources for schools. They bring a wealth of new knowledge and ideas to other teachers in their departments and it is important that they are supported on their campuses.

5.1.2. Article #1 The Accidental Mentor

In article one, "The Accidental Mentor", I discussed my own frustrations about not having a mentor to guide me through my first few years of teaching. While I did eventually find someone to help me, I was forced to find a mentor on my own. Using narrative inquiry, I explored the influence of my informal mentors on my teaching and mentoring practice. Narrative inquiry allowed me to burrow into my own stories and the stories of other teachers to find commonalities between myself and other teachers. I drew on the experiences of over twenty years of my career, and examined stories pertaining to being both a mentee and a mentor. I analyzed journal articles of various researchers, including Craig (1997, 2013, 2017), Darling-Hammond (2003, 2010, 2017), Ingersoll (2003), Ingersoll, Merrill and Stuckey (2014), Izadinia (2015), and Kelchtermans (2017) among several others. I used these researcher reflective writings as my field texts, analyzed them for emergent themes, and identified commonalities between my own experience and practice and the literature. Considering the influences that positive relationships with my early informal mentors had on my sustained teaching career was the provocation for examining how my experiences with mentors and

mentoring might give insights into the impact of mentoring on novice teacher beginning experiences and sustainability.

My experiences uncovered an often hidden side of district teacher induction mentoring systems the lack of buy-in by the assigned mentor. The comments from my assigned mentor the she was "too busy" and that I was "on my own," evidenced that she was not invested in being a mentor. They also suggest that she had not participated in mentor training, as this most probably would have involved her agreeing to be a mentor. Furthermore, the comments raise questions as to whether or not this teacher was consulted prior to being assigned as a mentor, which in turn raises questions about the school or district's understanding of, and appreciation for, the importance of mentoring in supporting novice teachers.

Exploring personal experiences reiterated the literature showing a need for effective mentorship to support novice teachers. It also demonstrated that effective novice teacher mentorship does not always come about through formal avenues, it can develop informally and organically through novice teacher interaction with colleagues. What I discovered regarding my personal practice and teacher growth, is that having no mentor or having a poor mentor has influenced how I mentor other new teachers. I never wanted another new teacher to feel the way I did my first few years of teaching: confused, anxious, and humiliated for asking dumb questions. I hope in the end that novice teacher and mentors alike, will be able to find some semblance of comfort in knowing that their struggles are not isolated to them. We all strive to find our way in this world, no matter what our calling, but by learning from other teachers' stories and

experiences we can reduce some of the anxiety that new teachers may have about surviving the first year of teaching.

5.1.3. Article #2 Mentoring and Teacher Induction: Imparting Pearls of Wisdom.

This article takes on a meta-level analysis of the mentor-mentee relationship and interactions between mentor Helen and mentee J. D. In "Pedagogy Through the Pearl Metaphor: Teaching as a Process of Ongoing Refinement," Craig, You, and Oh (2017) recount the situation of novice teacher J. D. J.D. was an African-American preservice teacher at the time, who was previously a college varsity football player. Fortunately for J. D., veteran teacher Helen informally became his mentor even though J. D. had an assigned mentor. Through this unofficial pairing, Helen was able to guide J. D. through his first year of teaching by providing him with "pearls" from her own teaching experiences. Helen and J. D. worked closely together throughout the year to develop lessons for the physical education classes they taught. The metaphor of the "strand of pearls" not only epitomizes the gathering of new knowledge for J. D., but also Helen's "pearls of wisdom" that she passed down to him. I was also able to re-tell and re-story my own experiences through this meta-analysis of Helen's story. When I was a novice teacher, I did not believe that my experiences would be something that I would want to pass on to other teachers. However, even serving as a bad example has merit. As an adjunct lecturer, I was able to educate my pre-service teachers on what not to do as a first year teacher. Many of the scenarios, fifteen and twenty years later, seemed laughable, but I believe that it offered a glimpse into the necessity of new teacher finding someone to mentor them. In "Pedagogy Through the Pearl Metaphor: Teaching as a

Process of Ongoing Refinement," (Craig, You, and Oh, 2017) , we are not told who J.D.'s official mentor actually is, we only know that Helen has taken over the job because of her proximity to him. They both taught sixth grade P.E. and seemed to share a planning period. We are never told why J.D. seeks out Helen for help, or why Helen offers her assistance, we only know that she does. This informal pairing seemed to satisfy all parties involved: J.D.'s need for someone to show him the ropes, and Helen's need to pass on her "pearls of wisdom", illuminating that informal mentoring does happen in schools. Indeed, most of my informal mentor pairings had more of an effect than the official mentor pairings. However, as I have stated before, it is important that novice teacher mentoring is not left to chance. There should be a purposeful and conscientious strategy behind the practice of mentor teachers.

5.1.4. Article #3 Mentoring and Novice Teachers: Teachers' Perceptions at a Local High School in Central Texas

Finally, I used narrative inquiry methods to explore the experiences of eight high school teachers in Central Texas concerning how they had been mentored and were mentoring others. Specifically, the inquiry examined the different types of mentors that the teachers had as novice teachers and how their relationship with their former mentor influenced their decision to remain in the teaching field. Teacher participant experiences in mentoring others was also included in this examination.

This inquiry revealed, is that my novice teacher experience was not unique. I am not the only teacher in Texas that had to find her own mentor her first year of teaching, in fact, finding one's own mentor seems to be the norm. Indeed, the majority of teachers

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that I have spoken to over the last twenty years have had strikingly familiar tales. Our stories are ones of abandonment and disillusionment during our first years of teaching. What we thought was going to be a satisfying and fulfilling career, turned out to be stressful and full of bureaucratic nonsense. Having someone with whom a new teacher can vent or come to in a time of crisis is important and I have come to the conclusion that there are only a few veteran teachers willing to step up to help.

Findings also indicated that all but one of the teachers that I interviewed was hesitant to become a formal mentor. Participating teachers claimed that they did not want the responsibility of a new teacher to impede their own practice and were only willing to provide limited assistance. Sandy was always willing to help no matter if she was designated as a formal mentor or as an informal one. Diana said she would have liked to have been a mentor, but at the time of the interview she served on several committees and had level leader and department chair duties that would prevent her from devoting time to mentor a novice teacher. Mark, Finn, Harper, Edwina, and Dave, said that they were available for new teachers to ask questions of, but did not want to commit to a full- time mentorship position. There was a consensus across participating teachers that mentoring a new teacher was akin to having a second job. They were primarily concerned about maintaining a full class load in addition to instructing a new teacher. When I taught for Gaines High School, I had approximately 130 students total. A quarter of those students were receiving special education services and another quarter of my students were English language learners of varying abilities. I did not have small children, coach a sport, or sponsor a club; I had plenty of time to mentor a novice

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teacher. I cannot imagine having anything extra on my plate and trying to mentor a novice teacher.

5.1.5. Discussion

Findings from the teacher participant interviews at Gaines High School, combined the meta-analysis of the "Metaphor of the pearl" article (Craig, You, & Oh, 2017), and my own experiences, captured in this broad narrative inquiry, suggest that having a mentor does make a difference in the career of a beginning teacher. They also suggest that personal motivations may have an influence on novice teacher sustainability and evidence the way that mentors provide mentees with specific feedback

Even when some teachers are not assigned a mentor or have a personal conflict with their mentor, they seem to seek out someone that can help them. In fact, one of the participants had become close friends with her former mentor. In contrast, my assigned mentors wanted nothing to do with me, and I was often left to figure out what to teach and how to teach it by myself with little to no help. Needless, to say, I did not form any lasting relationships with them, and ultimately, I was left to find my own mentor and resources. Finding a mentor that was willing to give me feedback on my practice made all the difference between staying and leaving the teaching field.

A common thread in these situations is the perseverance demonstrated by the novice teachers in their search for a mentor. Whether it was a desire to improve practice or tenaciousness in not wanting to fail, there was some sort of personal motivation that drove me and others to find a mentor. This seems to suggest that having a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006), possessing an attitude that looks for positive rather

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than negative options for improvement, may be a factor in novice teacher sustainability. By this I mean that novices with a growth mindset may be more resilient to less-than-favorable mentoring situations and search out mentors, as compared to novices with a fixed mindset that assume situations cannot be improved and therefore may not see out mentors on their own.

Another theme across the articles is that mentors provide specific feedback, or pearls of wisdom to borrow Helen's metaphor, that help novice teachers improve their practice. This was the case with my informal mentor who showed me how to plan lessons and use classroom management strategies effectively. Similarly, in J. D.'s situation, Helen showing him the ropes implies some sort of specific feedback and guidance. This same sort of specific feedback was evidenced in the eight participating teachers who were reluctant to act as mentors but recalled specific ways their mentors supported them.

These findings suggest that effective mentoring programs can help new teachers deal with the stress and frustration that often occur during the first few years of teaching. In my case, a mentor teacher was the difference between me staying a teacher or finding a new career.

Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley (2006) assert "that (a) mentoring and induction programs (collegial support), and (b) more administrative support were associated with higher rates of retention of beginning teachers" (p. 111). Not only do they indicate the necessity of mentor teachers for the induction of novice teachers, but also the need for these mentors to be properly trained as well. However, just retaining teachers may not

be enough. Schaefer, Long, and Clandinin (2012) discuss the need of sustaining novice

teachers during their tenure in order to retain them, "We suggest the need to shift the

conversation from one focused only on retaining teachers toward a conversation about

sustaining teachers throughout their careers" (p. 118). Novice teachers go from being

public-school students to college students and then are thrust into the front of a

classroom, responsible for 25-30 students, and expected to teach content and maintain

order. No matter how much preservice university teacher preparation the novice teacher

has had, it is never enough. There is no substitute for the real experience, and the

sometimes unpleasant realities of teaching cannot be covered in five or six

undergraduate courses. "Novice teachers need an environment where both their personal

and professional needs can be addressed and subsequently met" (Bickmore, 2013,p.

49). Another issue that has come to light is the need for mentor preparation programs.

Mentor teachers need to be trained to help with novice teacher induction because high

levels of stress from tight schedules, classroom management, learning new content,

learning new technology, and standardized testing can take a toll on new teachers and

veteran teachers alike (Gagen & Bowie, 2005). Mentor teachers are familiar with the

school climate and can help novice teachers navigate the often overwhelming first year

of teaching by providing support. This support can take the form of a shoulder to cry on,

a kind voice, or words of encouragement to the novice teacher. "Mentors need to be

advocates, collaborators, problem solvers, and strategists on behalf of both themselves

and the novice teachers" (Gagen & Bowie, 2005, p. 41). Most novice teachers are more

agreeable to more informal approaches to mentoring, such as having discussions or

common planning periods during the day, rather than the more formal methods of being observed, observing the mentor teacher, or discussing instructional strategies (Parker, 2010). I have also found that the more informal forms of mentoring are a better fit for my personality. In my experience, the more formal the mentoring style, the less connection is made between the novice teacher and mentor. I have witnessed mentoring sessions in which the mentor teacher was provided a script to use during the session. I found this quite unusual and the whole interaction seemed forced and fake. Indeed, there should be further research in the areas of matching mentors with novices, the degree of assistance provided by the mentors, and the frequency of interactions between the mentor and novice teacher (Parker, 2010). Strong mentoring "can keep novices from abandoning. . . [ambitious pedagogies] in favor of what they may perceive as safer, less complex activities" (Feiman-Nemser (2001a) p. 1029), which means less busy work and worksheets for students. Inexperienced teachers, in particular, need support systems in place for them to be successful. If we want "mentoring to improve the quality of classroom teaching, then we need mentors who are teachers of teaching" (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005, p. 695). I believe that there should be additional research into how we can best support and nurture new teachers so that they will continue to support and nurture new teachers as well.

5.1.6. The End and the Future

This is the end. Completing this Doctorate of Philosophy has been a journey that has taken five seemingly long years. Oh, but the things I have learned in such a short time! I initially started out with a completely different topic of study: Teachers use of

drugs and alcohol to combat the symptoms of stress. This particular topic had special

meaning for me, as many of the teachers I worked with drank heavily to deal with the

stress of being a teacher. I did, however, come to discover over the last five years, that

mentoring had a special place in my heart as well. I did not see myself as a mentor

initially, because I had only had terrible experiences with mentors. What I did not

realize, however, was that I was being a mentor to the teachers around me without even

knowing that was what I was doing. To me, being a mentor is just an extension of being

a teacher; another facet in my teaching persona. It is ingrained in me to offer help, even

when I know that I am physically and emotionally exhausted. This happens even when I

know that I do not have the time to do so. Being a teacher is part of who I am as a

person, this is my truth. Over the last 20 years, I have been able to pass on my own

"pearls of wisdom" to pre-service and novice teachers alike. Each "pearl" was a valuable

lesson that I had to learn the hard way, and I do not want other novice teachers to have to

learn them that way. It seems that I have always been a teacher, and I will most likely be

one for the rest of my life. What this means, is that I will never stop wanting to learn or

to discover new things and tell others about what I have learned. I will always want to

find ways to help novice or veteran teachers in the trenches. I will always want to create

a nurturing and caring environment for children to acquire a love of learning.

In the future, I intend to continue my work with novice teacher mentoring, but I

am also interested in completing my study of teachers' use of drugs and alcohol to

combat stress. Teachers in public schools have extensive workloads in addition to

teaching 30 or more students per class. With the initiation of No Child Left Behind in

2002, standardized testing and benchmarking students have become a way of life for many teachers in the U.S. The pressure of constant testing, teacher evaluation, lack of control over curriculum, issues with students and parents, and administrative pressure to have students do well on standardized testing has caused many teachers to look for outlets to manage their stress or to quit the profession entirely (Ingersoll, 1997, p.32). Countless teachers turn to alcohol, prescription medications, caffeine, food, tobacco, and illegal drugs to combat the stress of everyday teaching (Travers & Cooper, 1996; Watts & Short, 1990; Watts, Cox, Wright, Garrison, Herkimer & Howze, 1991). Teachers are an essential part of the education of America's youth. I believe that it is important to understand that teachers are human beings who are under a great deal of stress on a daily basis and the effects of that stress can be damaging—with and without mentors. Darling-Hammond (2010) states, "Teaching has long experienced steep attrition in the first few years of teaching, and about 30% of new teachers leave the profession within five years" (p. 18). Many of these teachers are leaving because of high stress and overwhelming workloads. Teachers who drink alcohol on a regular basis are at a higher risk of illness and work absenteeism. Numerous studies (Travers & Cooper, 1996; Stewart, Coll & Osguthorpe, 2013; Zysberg, Orenshtein, Gimmon & Robinson, 2017) have all indicated that further research is necessary into the coping strategies of teachers. I believe that we are all aware that teaching is a very stressful career choice, but I believe that with that awareness comes the responsibility to help teachers find appropriate ways to manage their stress. Whether as a mentor or researcher into the causes of teacher stress and ways to manage it, my aim going forward is to share my

personal practical knowledge and understanding gained through this research to help improve the practice and situations of others, and hopefully have a hand in their remaining in the profession.

Finally, there is a need for strong mentoring infrastructures to permeate the school system so that novice teachers do not slip through the cracks or engage in self-destructive behaviors as a coping mechanism to deal with the barrage of the school milieu. It is important that education stakeholders actively invest in enacting effective mentoring preparation courses for veteran teachers. This not only includes administrators at the campus and district levels, but also teacher preparation programs. My own teacher preparation program did not prepare me for the rigors that I would be facing in the public school setting. It is evident that mentors need to help guide neophyte teachers through the impetus of their teaching career. Moreover, as research has indicated (Darling-Hammond, 2003, 2010, 2017; Ingersoll, 2014; Papay, 2017; Redding & Henry, 2019), it is also important that a comprehensive and responsive mentoring framework, as outlined in this research, for novice teachers is experienced as a prolonged support throughout their first five years of teaching. The research of (Darling-Hammond, 2003, 2010, 2017; Ingersoll, 1997, 2012, 2014) also supports the notion that mentoring is a perennial support system that should be perceived of as a journey and not a destination, or as Slattery (2013) terms "currere". Not only can mentor teachers' offer a multitude of site-based pedagogical experiences for novice teachers to learn from, they can also provide lessons in persistence, resilience, innovation and creativity to distill in nascent teachers the full nuance of being an educator in the twenty-first century.

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5.2 References

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