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Characterizing mentoring capital in a residency program through mentor's voices

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of our study was to examine mentors' conceptualizations of mentoring residents (preservice teachers) in a teacher residency program. Understanding the nuances of mentoring in a year-long placement in a mentor's classroom may further illuminate mentoring in this context. In this qualitative, longitudinal study, we used constant comparative analysis to allow the data to drive recurring patterns and ideas linked to real-life situations and values coding to examine mentors' conceptualizations of mentoring in a residency program. Residents enrolled in the federally-funded Teaching Residency Program for Critical Shortage Areas program were placed in a high-need urban secondary school for a year-long clinical experience to work alongside mentors, who had a non-evaluative role. By examining mentors' conceptualizations of mentoring in this particular context, our data reveal aspects of their agency that reflected three main themes: (a) professional altruism, (b) extant knowledge, and (c) resident as stimulus. Our findings add to the research on mentoring by illuminating the voices of mentors to describe how they conceptualized mentoring and to further examine their motivations for mentoring, contributions to the mentee, and professional gains.

Researchers (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004) have reported the benefits afforded through mentoring in educational settings and the critical nature of a mentoring partnership (Zachary, 2002). It is common practice in many school settings for experienced teachers to mentor novice teachers to help them navigate the systemic and instructional demands of the job, a practice especially important for those employed in high-need schools. In this study, however, the mentoring of preservice teachers is examined in a specific context, a teacher residency

program which served as a year-long clinical experience for graduate teacher candidates. These teacher candidates were enrolled in the federally-funded Teaching Residency Program for Critical Shortage Areas (TRP-CSA, DOE – U336S090041) and taught and learned alongside mentors in high-need urban schools during an entire academic school year. Unlike student teaching, where preservice teachers are often referred to as interns and spend several weeks during an academic semester in the classroom with their assigned cooperating teachers, preservice teachers enrolled in a residency program are referred to as residents and spend an entire academic year in the classroom with their assigned mentors. The mentor, who had a non-evaluative role in this study, was constantly present 'during the critical moments of the preservice teacher's extended field experience' (Scherer, 2012, p. 18). This means that teacher candidates received daily support and guidance to minimize obstacles and emotional dissonance of teaching in a high-need school. Given that mentors were provided with an opportunity to assist an aspiring teacher in their classroom during an extended teaching experience, does mentoring look different in this context? Extending on previous research (Garza & Harter, 2016; Garza, Duchaine, & Reynosa, 2014) regarding mentoring practices, the purpose of our study was to examine mentors' conceptualizations of mentoring in a teacher residency program. Understanding the nuances of mentoring in a year-long placement may further illuminate the mentoring process for residents in this context.

Theoretical framework

Research on mentoring continues to elucidate the many ways in which the guidance of an experienced colleague can significantly influence the professional and career development of an inexperienced colleague in many fields including academia and education (Chen, 2016; Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016; Reese, 2016). For years, school systems have relied on mentors to instill cultural and organizational values in new teachers; indoctrinating them to institutional norms while also helping them to develop their talents and abilities (Ehrich et al., 2004; Zachary, 2002). Specifically, mentors often provide personal examples of organizational comportment as they assist teachers in navigating the systemic and instructional aspects of teaching (Garza, 2009), towards the goal of better understanding student needs and the factors that influence student success in schools (Fresko & Wertheim, 2006). This study is guided by the theoretical underpinnings of mentoring, a commonly employed vehicle by which a beginning teacher can receive guidance and support as s/he becomes familiar with the school culture and transitions into the teaching profession (Garza, 2009; Hobson, 2012).

Mentor motivations

The process of mentoring is one that often requires a significant commitment of time and energy from the mentor, whether the role of mentoring is assigned or

entered voluntarily. The ability to offer support, advice and feedback requires the mentor to have the opportunity to observe and interact with the mentee while also introducing the protégé to the new organizational culture and student community. Researchers have indicated that a mentor's motives can have a significant impact on the quality of mentoring provided (Allen, 2003; Smith-Jentsch, Fullick, & Bencaz, 2012). While a mentor's motives can be extrinsic in nature, such as those associated with career advancement ambitions or economic compensation, many mentors identify more intrinsic motives, such as the desire to help new teachers and make meaningful contributions to the organization, as reasons for engaging in the practice (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005; Woolfolk, 2004).

Mentors generally possess a willingness to commit their time to support, assist and facilitate the professional growth of the protégé to enhance a colleague's development without the encumbrance of serving as evaluators (Bey & Holmes, 1992; Odell & Huling, 2000). Moreover, 'when intrinsically motivated, the mentor helps the protégé because this activity in itself is a source of satisfaction and enjoyment' (Janssen, van Vuuren, & de Jong, 2014, p. 271). There exists, as some authors describe, a 'relative altruism' (Chen, Fan, & Tsai, 2014, p. 170) in the motives of the intrinsically motivated mentor and in their desire to help create a legacy of success by sharing the knowledge, wisdom and expertise they have gained after years of practice (Clauson, Wejr, Frost, McRae & Straight, 2011). These mentors are not acting out of a sense of selfish ambition; rather they display a selfless concern for the aspiring teacher, often seeking to prevent their novice colleagues from experiencing the same pitfalls that befell them upon entering the profession. Also, they do not seek to replicate themselves in their protégés. These mentors display an altruistic tendency (Garza, Ramirez, & Ovando, 2009b) with a willingness to allow 'for the development of an emerging teacher identity in contrast to the mentor teacher's identity' (Garza et al., 2014, p. 229). They are driven to provide guidance and assistance to the protégé because, as Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) suggested, they perceive this sharing of knowledge and expertise as critical to the mentee's success.

Characteristics and knowledge

Selecting quality mentors is crucial to establishing a successful mentoring process, yet it can be a difficult endeavor because there are numerous definitions of mentoring as well as varying terms used to describe mentors and mentor roles (Brondyk & Searby, 2013). There are several attributes and characteristics of mentors, both formal and informal, that researchers have found to be integral to the identification of quality mentors. These include aspects such as: years of experience, caring, sensitivity, selflessness, effective communication, being a good listener, being non-judgmental, being trustworthy, and displaying a commitment to both the practice of teaching and the process of mentoring, among others (Bey & Holmes, 1992; Cho, Ramanan, & Feldman, 2011; Garza & Harter, 2016; Jonson,

2002; Joshi & Sikdar, 2015). For mentors in schools, acknowledging these traits indicates a 'value of their contributions, making it possible to utilize the competences and experiences of the teachers as contributions in schools' work development' (Henningsson-Yousif & Aasen, 2015, p. 341).

One of the most frequently cited characteristics of quality mentoring is a well-established professional capacity on the part of the mentor, where knowledge has been accumulated and skills have been honed over years of practice. For example, some school mentoring programs value years of experience as an essential quality for mentoring (Steadman & Simmons, 2007). Similar to this notion, Garza et al. (2009b) found that mentors perceived their cumulative years of teaching experience as one aspect of quality mentoring. The combination of knowledge, skills, experiences and resources embodied by experienced mentors is described as professional and pedagogical capital by some researchers (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Henningsson-Yousif & Aasen, 2015; Roland, Johnson, Jones, & Boyer, 2016). Therefore, it is critical to communicate these forms of pedagogical and professional capital effectively when passed from one teacher (mentor) to another (mentee). In doing so, the mentoring process fosters a legacy of accomplishment and establishes a culture of collaboration that may promote the effectiveness of the teaching profession.

Self-improvement

A significant aspect of mentoring is that it encompasses an 'important duality; it is both a relationship and a process' (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005, p. 276). In mentoring relationships, mentors are provided the opportunity to improve their own instructional practices in two very significant ways. First, they engage in inwardly-focused self-improvement through reflection and retrospective analysis (Cherubini, Kitchen, Goldblatt, & Smith, 2011) and anticipate the needs of their mentees by analyzing their praxis via the perspective of the protégé. As Huling and Resta (2001) acknowledged, while 'mentor teachers assist their protégés in improving their teaching, they also improve their own professional competency' (p. 2). Moreover, Leshem (2014) suggested that self-perception about their roles as a mentor is critical for their own development as mentors.

Furthermore, one of the core attributes of mentoring, according to Haggard, Dougherty, Turban, and Wilbanks (2011) is 'reciprocity' where 'mentoring requires a *reciprocal* relationship, involving mutuality of social exchange as opposed to a one-way relationship' (p. 292). Traditional hierarchical structures are eschewed for more collaborative relationships where the mentor and protégé are partners and co-learners (Brondyk & Searby, 2013). As documented in other studies (Beltman & Schaeben, 2012; Coates, 2012; Grima, Paillé, Mejia, & Prud'homme, 2014; Huling & Resta, 2001) mentors benefit from more collegial relationships where they also learn from their mentees. In these mentoring relationships, the roles of the mentor and the mentee are dynamic and reciprocal. These relationships are not based on a

unidirectional flow of ideas and support from an experienced teacher to a novice, but rather on a reciprocal flow back and forth between the new and accomplished teacher (Shank, 2005, p. 74). This is similar to the concept of reverse mentoring discussed by Murphy (2012) in which the protégés can help mentors expand their knowledge base and integrate new skills into their repertoire. This approach emphasizes the collaborative nature of the mentoring relationship (Jones & Brown, 2011) and allows for reciprocal teaching and learning between the mentor and the resident. Unlike the study conducted by Goodwin, Roegman, and Reagan (2016) where mentors, 'seemed primarily intent on helping residents become familiar with the already known, and to replicate what is in place' (p. 1207), reciprocal mentoring relationships take advantage of the additional presence in the classroom, affording the mentors an opportunity to reflect on their own teaching practices through the lens of the mentee. This additional presence in the classroom can serve as an extrinsic stimulus to provoke the mentor's reflection about pedagogical beliefs and dispositions (Bowden, 2004).

Researchers (Jonson, 2002; Rush, Blair, Chapman, Codner, & Pearce, 2008) have identified characteristics of effective mentors such as accepting the mentee as an equal partner, communicating effectively, being an empathic listener, demonstrating commitment to teaching, and caring. Although the discourse on mentoring may focus on mentor roles (Friedrichsen, Chval, & Teuscher, 2007), mentor experiences (Trubowitz, 2004), traits of effective relationships (Fluckiger, McGlamery, & Edick, 2005), and benefits of mentoring (Murphy & Ensher, 2006), mentors' voices regarding their conceptualizations of mentoring in a residency program are limited in the extant literature. Illuminating their voices may be one way to inform residency programs and school entities with valuable insight to help enhance capacity for both the mentor and mentee in the residency context.

Methods

In this qualitative, longitudinal study, we used constant comparative analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to find recurring patterns and ideas linked to real-life situations in the data, and values coding (Saldaña, 2016) to examine mentors' conceptualizations of mentoring in a residency program. 'Values coding is the application of codes to qualitative data that reflect a participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspective or worldview' (Saldaña, 2016, p. 131). Analyzing mentors' perceptions related to the purpose and research questions of this study 'illustrates the fact that mentoring is conceptualized and enacted in very different ways for different purposes' (Brondyk & Searby, 2013, p. 193). This interpretative study was framed within the theoretical underpinnings of the mentoring process (Bey & Holmes, 1992; Odell & Huling, 2000). The following questions guided this study: (a) *What motivates mentors to participate in a residency program?* (b) *How do mentors actualize mentoring in a residency program?* (c) *How do mentors describe the impact of mentoring in a residency program?*

Participants and context

The TRP-CSA was a federally funded residency program designed to recruit, prepare and retain science, mathematics and special education teachers in high-need secondary urban schools. For the purposes of the grant program, a high-need school referred to schools that had comparatively high teacher turnover rates and high proportions of students identified as economically disadvantaged. The overarching goal of the program was to prepare culturally responsive teachers who are equipped with effective strategies for teaching students who are culturally, academically, linguistically, and socially diverse. This highly selective, 14-month program included a year-long placement in the mentor's classroom and resulted in the attainment of a master of education (MEd) degree and a Texas teacher certification.

The nearly 86,000 students enrolled in one partnering school district embody a diverse student population: African American (10%), Asian Pacific Islander (4%), Latino (60%), Native American (<1%), and White (24%) students. Of these students, nearly 64% were identified as economically disadvantaged, 29% were proficient in a language other than English, and 10% had been diagnosed with a disability.

The second partnering school district enrolled over 10,600 students that also included a diverse population. African American (11%), Asian Pacific Islander (<1%), Latino (82%), Native American (<1%), and White (6%) students. Of these students, nearly 87% were identified as economically disadvantaged, 32% were proficient in a language other than English, and 10% had been diagnosed with a disability.

Participants included 45 mentor teachers (31 high school and 14 middle school) teaching in high-need schools in the two districts described above. There were 30 female and 15 male mentors (1 Asian, 3 African American, 7 Hispanic and 34 White). Twenty-nine mentors taught science, while 16 taught mathematics, and 6 also taught special education. We used purposeful sampling because the mentors would be able to 'inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon' in our study (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). TRP-CSA mentors had a teaching experience that ranged from two to 35 years, while a few had no mentoring experience. Of those that had one to 10 years of mentoring experience, some had mentored student teachers and/or novice teachers. Mentors collaborated with their mentee Tuesday through Friday at their respective school campuses because residents attended classes at the university on Mondays.

The TRP-CSA staff selected the mentors after a careful screening and interview process and mentors received an annual $3400 stipend for mentoring in the residency program. Mentors and residents were paired based on the similarity of the content of their teaching areas for an entire school year. Mentors did not serve in an evaluative role, instead, university faculty and project leaders evaluated residents' performance. Mentors' participation included two days of mentor training that focused on the roles of mentoring. In addition, because special education was part of the residents' certification program, they also received instruction on

inclusion and collaborative teaching. These professional development sessions occurred during the summer before the academic school year.

Data sources and analysis

Data sources included four different years of mentor surveys as a way to triangulate the responses to the open-ended questions at different points in time. Although the surveys were administered by the TRP-CSA program's external evaluator, the lead author provided feedback on the mentoring questions to ensure they were framed by the extant literature. The open-ended survey questions included the following: (a) *Why did you decide to become a mentor?* (b)*What were your expectations from being a mentor?* (c) *How has the mentoring experience influenced your teaching?* (d) *Please list attributes or characteristics you possess that make you an effective mentor.* (e) *What has been the most valuable aspect of participating as a mentor teacher of TRP-CSA?* The survey questions provided a link to the participants' beliefs and context setting, thus providing data to address the research questions posed in our study.

Mentor responses from the longitudinal surveys were analyzed independently using values coding (Saldaña, 2016) and constant comparative analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We used open-coding strategies to reduce the initial concepts, to identify their properties, and to begin to place them into categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Independently, we coded mentors' responses (Saldaña, 2016) before discussing our individual work that resulted in 8–10 different categories. Then through constant comparative analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), we sorted and reduced initial categories into six themes with descriptive statements. After discussing our preliminary themes, we again independently coded and further reduced our six themes to three final themes with descriptive statements. Bias may have occurred in the coding of the data, therefore, through careful independent reflection and peer debriefing (McMillan, 2012), we identified patterns in the meaning of mentors' responses before agreeing on the labels for the final three themes. Discussing similarities and differences of mentor responses situated within each theme contributed to the trustworthiness of the findings.

Findings and discussion

According to Ambrosetti and Dekkers (2010), 'mentoring has become more prominent in preservice teacher education,' replacing in some cases, the model in which preservice teachers are supported by a university supervisor and evaluated by a cooperating teacher during a semester-long student teaching practicum (p. 42). Residents enrolled in the TRP-CSA program worked alongside mentors, who had a non-evaluative role. Considering these distinctive aspects of the residency model, our study examined mentors' conceptualizations of mentoring preservice teachers and the nuances of mentoring in a year-long placement. By examining

mentors' conceptualizations of mentoring in this particular context, aspects of mentors' agency reflected three main themes: (a) professional altruism, (b) extant knowledge, and (c) resident as stimulus. In the following sections, we operationalize each theme followed by a discussion with emic data that reflect mentors' conceptualizations about mentoring as related to the theme.

Professional altruism

Professional altruism refers to mentors' self-less desire to help aspiring teachers and the concern for their welfare. 'Experienced teachers who volunteer to mentor usually believe they can contribute to teacher development, are needed, or an altruistic purpose guides them to help others' (Garza et al., 2009b, p. 3). In concert with findings in other research (Clauson et al., 2011), most mentors in our study expressed a responsibility to help aspiring teachers succeed by providing them with necessary knowledge and skills. As a participant expressed,

> I wanted to help a first-time teacher work on skills that can set them up for success in the future. That opportunity was not available to me when I started and I feel like mentor programs can really help expose new teachers to pitfalls and help them work through them with someone there to offer guidance and expertise.

Many mentors' own personal experiences early in their career helped to shape their motivation for mentoring residents described by Iancu-Haddad and Oplatka (2009). This perspective includes enhancing the resident's professional capacity, but more importantly, inculcating practices for their future use (Cramer, 2016).

The following comments also reflected mentors' willing desire to share professional knowledge: 'as part of being an educator I wanted to help improve educational practices of new and inexperienced colleagues,' and 'I wanted to share my experience with someone coming into the profession.' Mentors were motivated by the opportunity to contribute their pedagogical knowledge and skills with an inexperienced aspiring teacher. In doing so, mentors viewed themselves as conduits of critical information they possessed and perceived sharing this capital as instrumental to the resident's success, a notion acknowledged by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012). In addition, the sharing of information was coupled with a belief in the importance of their role.

> It's important to provide relevant and appropriate experiences to pre-service teachers so that they may be successful upon entering the field. The guidance of a mentor teacher provides an invaluable resource for pre-service teachers to model and allows them to develop their own teaching skills in a safe environment where they are allowed to learn and make mistakes.

While most mentors' reasons for mentoring included providing pedagogical knowledge, instructional support, and guidance, as acknowledged in other studies (Bey & Holmes, 1992; Odell & Huling, 2000), a few mentors expressed the desire to provide a safe environment for the mentee. This is interesting to note because a focus of their motivation included the resident, an aspect not mentioned in other

studies (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009) that explain why mentors volunteer to mentor. These mentors focused on establishing a safe space where residents could make mistakes, learn, and develop their own teaching skills. This notion of creating a safe space for effective collaboration as an important aspect of a mentoring relationship is in concert with research by Roland et al. (2016).

Mentors in our study also recognized a critical need to foster residents' understanding and preparedness to succeed in a high-need school with many students who face economic hardships and/or struggle academically. As one participant commented,

> My expectations as a mentor was to be able to shape my mentee into a productive teacher who understands and handles the needs of our population. To develop a new teacher who has a successful classroom management frame-work and a curriculum that also meets the needs of our low SES and ELL populations. My hope is that my mentee will have the tools needed to be a successful classroom teacher for years to come without the severe learning curve that can come when working with such a challenging population.

This mentor's experience and expertise gained from working in high-need schools contributed to a sense of obligation to prepare residents for success in working with a particular student population, and reflects a genuine concern for the students in the classroom. Similar to findings reported by Clauson, Wejr, Frost, McRae, and Straight (2011), the opportunity to foster the growth of another individual with specific knowledge has value for the mentee. Although very few mentors mentioned their students as an expectation of their participation as mentors, this is an important finding to explore in more depth. Knowing why a mentor's students are an influential factor in both motive and personal expectations for mentoring may further clarify mentor roles.

Mentoring residents encompassed a broader depth of the dynamics involved in teaching and an understanding of being a culturally responsive professional that included the larger community outside the classroom.

> My expectations were to assist my mentee in not only the content knowledge, but also in the day to day practices of an educator. I also wanted to assist my mentee in the cultural sensitivity, and relationships – with students, parents, colleagues, and the community – that are necessary to be most successful for your students.

This comment reflects a much broader perspective in the type of assistance provided to the mentee. This is critical given that the residents would be employed in high-need urban schools, and as Catapano (2006) acknowledged, this understanding 'sets the stage for pre-service teachers to enter their classroom as new teachers with the skills to problem solve, move conflict to action and work to help children in their classroom succeed' (p. 94). As new teachers enter diverse classrooms, this pedagogical capital, as cited by Henningsson-Yousif and Aasen (2015), may contribute to a novice teachers' confidence and dispositions. 'Effective mentoring can help individuals put things in perspective and evaluate alternatives' (Cramer, 2016, p. 38).

Data also suggested that a majority of the participants articulated a personal desire or moral obligation for their involvement with mentoring residents in the residency program, (Garza, 2009; Hammer & Williams, 2005) as reflected in the following comment:

> It's been interesting watching the program grow from year to year. I value most the ability to give back to the profession by sharing my experience and helping those new to the profession become better stronger teachers when they eventually earn the responsibility of teaching in their own classroom.

In concert with other research (Chen et al., 2014), this comment conveys an altruistic value reflecting mentors' commitment to developing quality aspiring teachers and a dedication to the profession. Although the act of 'engaging in the knowledge sharing process can enhance teachers' professional development and teaching quality' (Chen et al., 2014, p. 177), the intrinsic belief of helping a neophyte grow and develop is critical to the action.

Extant knowledge

Extant Knowledge refers to the experiences and cognitive understanding that inform a mentor's practice. Mentors recognized their knowledge and expertise, such as organizational skills, dispositions, motivational ability in the classroom, skillfulness at delegating tasks, competency in providing feedback, and varied instructional strategies as important characteristics of effective mentoring, as identified in other studies (Bey & Holmes, 1992; Cho et al., 2011; Garza & Harter, 2016; Jonson, 2002; Joshi & Sikdar, 2015). In addition, many of the participants valued their teaching experiences as a characteristic of an effective mentor: 'I believe I am and have been an effective teacher over my eleven years of experience in the classroom,' and 'I have ten years experience teaching in two different school districts.' Another participant noted the importance of the experience at a high-need school: 'I have been teaching in a Title I school for six years and I have learned how to better serve this community by listening to my students.' While these mentors acknowledge the duration of their job experience as an important aspect of mentoring, the comments do not express the quality of their teaching experiences. If mentors cannot explain the nuances involved in teaching, the effectiveness of their role may be limited to a transmission of fundamental information, thus limiting the potential of their mentoring.

While some of the participants had previous experience with student teachers, two mentors mentioned the usefulness of working with a novice teacher.

> In the past I've been a full time Mentor to teachers with 1–3 years of service, from this experience I felt I had a lot to share and give in the development of a person aspiring to be a teacher.

and another commented, 'I have mentored several teachers through support programs in their first year.' Just as Steadman and Simmons (2007) acknowledged, these comments suggest that experience alone equates to effective mentoring,

a perspective that may be influenced by school mentoring programs that have different criteria for mentors. However, these comments do not reflect the valuable knowledge and skills acquired through these experiences to enhance mentoring. Supporting a novice teacher and a resident involve two different mentoring contexts. Interaction with the novice teacher can be infrequent, while the resident interacts with the mentor in the classroom daily. Successfully accommodating a full-time resident in the classroom throughout an entire academic year often requires a complete reconceptualization of the mentors' teaching practices where mentors and residents are engaged in ongoing cycles of observation, reflection, discussion, modification and re-application.

Mentors also noted that leadership experience was an important trait for mentoring: 'I've held several leadership positions over the years.' Another mentor identified the specific type of leadership position, 'I have been a department chair,' while another provided different examples to reflect the type of leadership role: 'I have been involved in leadership roles on the campus that range from being the student academic advisory program coordinator, to being a disciplinary literacy coach for the science department at (school).' These comments suggest that some mentors viewed mentoring as a form of leadership role, supervisory in nature, similar to findings by Beltman and Schaeben (2012). While mentoring may involve supervision in some cases, this perception may limit the quality of the mentoring experience and the professional development for both parties. When mentors assume a supervisory role in the mentoring relationship, they may view their interactions through a more hierarchical lens, with a traditionally unidirectional flow of information (Brondyk & Searby, 2013; Shank, 2005). This approach can unconsciously cause the mentor to overlook opportunities to learn from the mentee. As Leshem (2014) affirmed, 'How mentors perceive their roles is of great importance for their own professional development and consequently for promoting their identities as professional mentors within their educational institutions' (p. 270).

Knowing one's own strengths and acknowledging appropriate dispositions was another aspect mentors valued as critical to mentoring. Most mentors identified professional dispositions as a critical trait of an effective mentor, reflected in the following affective accounts: 'I enjoy teaching students and am able to present teaching in a positive light that is not overly sarcastic or detestable,' 'I have a very calm demeanor, especially in frustrating circumstances,' 'I am easy to approach and easy to work with,' 'I am not overly controlling or set in my ways,' and 'I am a good listener.' Mentors in our study were ready to accept a resident, but more importantly, they communicated attributes reflective of their professional demeanor. These attributes are critical to building a trusting relationship and necessary for quality mentoring to occur, also acknowledged by Smith-Jentsch et al. (2012). These comments also reveal a regard mentors place on how they may be perceived by others. This means that mentors in our study wanted to be perceived as being able to interact effectively with others, thus promoting a strong culture for learning, as documented by Fluckiger et al. (2005).

Resident as stimulus

Resident as stimulus refers to the influence of an additional collegial presence that influences the mentor's professional growth through observation and reciprocal interaction. Mentors willingly accepted an opportunity to enhance their pedagogical capacity by learning from and with the resident. As a mentor affirmed,

> I was asked by my principal and thought it would be extremely valuable to me and my students. I thought it would be exciting to be able to collaborate, teach, and learn from another individual invested in our students' futures.

The personal rewards from an effective mentoring relationship can be beneficial for the mentor, but this comment acknowledges the benefit also afforded to the students. While past research on mentoring has identified the desire to promote self-improvement, the literature does not mention helping students as a reason for mentoring (Zachary, 2000).

Collaboration between mentor and mentee also involved a mindset and an expectation that transmitting knowledge was not hierarchical in nature. 'I believe that the strongest characteristic that makes me an effective mentor is that I am open to learning from my mentee. I believe the mentoring process is a two-way dynamic between peers,' expressed a participant. Another shared a similar notion. 'I expected that being a mentor would be a positive learning experience, as I would learn from my beginning teacher and he/she would learn from me.' This involved a two-way mode of communication, learning throughout the year, and eagerly trying and implementing new ideas in the classroom. In concert with other research (Haggard et al., 2011), the openness to sharing ideas and learning from each other was a dominant reason mentors participated in the residency program.

Being able to collaborate and learn from the resident while promoting his/her growth was central to mentors' readiness to teach and learn alongside a preservice teacher (Zachary, 2002). This process suggested a collegial undertaking (Grima et al., 2014) where both parties are teacher and student. As a mentor explained:

> I approach mentor teaching as a peer to peer collaborative teaching endeavor. I expect that the mentee-mentor relationship will be one of mutual benefit and I expect to grow and change as a result of the experience just as much as I expect my mentee teacher to grow. I think this attitude leads me to be a good mentor.

This notion is in concert with other research (Brondyk & Searby, 2013) that acknowledged the mentor and resident as equal partners where reciprocal learning transpires.

Mentors also viewed the mentoring experience as an opportunity for continuous learning through self-reflection of their own praxis. The following comment, 'Helping another teacher challenges me to reflect and improve my own approach to education. There is also a great benefit from the resident bringing their current education to the classroom,' suggests the value placed on the mentee's knowledge and skills. Another mentor commented: 'I also expected to reflect on my classroom practices and learn from my mentee – they are fresh eyes and

brains in education.' Mentors were open to new learning and the willingness to accept new ideas caused them to consider different approaches unfamiliar to their pedagogical thinking. The perspective to learn from another person while being the teacher suggests that mentors accepted the mentee as a colleague, much in accordance with Shank's (2005) research. This open-minded approach also allows for the mentor to occupy multiple roles in the classroom, specifically, those of teacher and learner.

Mentors also acknowledged the value of dialoguing with their mentee and embraced pedagogical conversations to influence the growth and professional development of both parties. As one mentor described, 'I am also very open to new ideas and trying new or different strategies. I enjoy constructive criticism and therefore feel the mentoring process is a 2 way street for growth (for both the mentor and mentee).' Mentoring a resident provided a new learning opportunity for participants as reflected in the following comments. 'Every mentee I have had has left me with a new insight,' 'I am excited to share what I know and to grow with a mentee,' and 'I also was open to learn from the individual,' suggest participants viewed the mentoring opportunity as a collaborative endeavor to share with another person, while at the same time, learn from the resident and grow through self-reflection. While this collaborative dimension is in concert with other research (Marcum-Dietrich, Dreon, & Mahoney, 2013), mentors commented on how teaching and learning with a resident in the classroom fostered self-reflection of their daily practice, thereby indicating the potential for self-actualization.

> I decided to be a mentor because it would allow me to look at the teaching profession from another perspective and to spend more time reflecting on my teaching practices and the reasons behind the decisions I make as an educator.

This comment not only highlighted the benefits of the resident's presence in the classroom, but also suggests the mentor's conscious and intentional decision to introduce a catalyst for change into the classroom environment. Sharing a classroom with a resident created a space not only for self-learning but for additional pedagogical knowledge and skills to be shared with the mentor's students (Marcum-Dietrich et al., 2013).

Accommodating a resident for an entire school-year compelled mentors to reflect on their own teaching practices through the active lens of the resident. Mentors recognized the value of teaching alongside a preservice teacher and acknowledged how observing the teacher candidate teach in the same classroom promoted new learning through reflection. As a mentor described:

> It has helped me reflect on my teaching practices in a whole new way. I can watch my mentee execute a lesson that I prepared and see how it works from a whole new lens. I also have been able to watch her try new lesson ideas and see how they work. She was able to connect right away with the students and was often able to tell me why they were behaving a certain way if I missed it or couldn't figure it out myself.

Mentors' perceptions revealed the primary value they placed on varied types of educational experiences that helped to shape their professional career and

broadened their pedagogical knowledge (Rush et al., 2008). Expanding mentors' pedagogical capacity also involved self-assessment. A mentor explained: 'It has greatly influenced my teaching because it has brought me back to fundamentals and made me evaluate my own teaching on regular basis.' Mentors also communicated how discussing their teaching practice helped them discover aspects of their approaches to instruction, as echoed in the following comment.

> The mentoring process has influenced my teaching by allowing me the opportunity to be more reflective in my own teaching. By actively engaging in a dialogue about teaching practice, instructional design and implementation on a daily basis I have learned about my own teaching style.

In addition to acknowledging the new learning, mentors also commented on how this was used for self-improvement. As a mentor asserted, 'Looking at my teaching in a self-reflective way I was able to change or fine tune many aspects of my teaching style.' Mentors commented on how the mentoring experience allowed them to evaluate their daily classroom practice to improve their extant knowledge (Beltman & Schaeben, 2012). In addition to acknowledging new learning, mentors commented on how reflective practice influenced their pedagogical growth and allowed them to gain new insight about their teaching (Fresko & Wertheim, 2006). Learning from a less experienced younger person is a similar characteristic of reverse mentoring described by Murphy (2012).

Limitations

Our study is delimited to the participants in one residency program at a large public university, although longitudinal data over four consecutive years were obtained. Participants in other residency programs might encounter a different set of circumstances that may influence the design of the clinical experience and experiences in the school setting. While our findings add to research that illuminates mentors' conceptualizations about mentoring, conclusions and interpretation of the findings are based on a small sample size. Participants in this study self-reported through an open-ended online survey; therefore, extent of time dedicated to responding may have influenced the thoughtfulness of the response.

Concluding thoughts

While mentors' motives for mentoring, their contributions to the mentoring process, and the benefits afforded to them through mentoring are acknowledged in the extant literature, our findings add to that body of research on mentoring by illuminating the voices of mentors to describe how they conceptualized mentoring in a residency program. Kochan, Searby, George, and Edge (2015) stated that 'the context and culture of mentoring matter and they should be examined and addressed at all levels of interaction' (p. 90). In view of this, our study examined mentors' conceptualizations of mentoring in a year-long teacher residency

program to examine further their motivations for mentoring, contributions to the mentee, and professional gains.

First, while our findings highlighted common themes in the existing body of work on mentoring such as mentors' openness to new learning and enhancing pedagogical knowledge and skills, they also acknowledged the benefits to their students as a motive for participation. Previously, researchers (Marcum-Dietrich et al., 2013) have only acknowledged that mentors' students benefit as a result of their participation in the mentoring dyad, but not as a direct motive for participation. As van Ginkel, Oolbekkink, Meijer, and Verloop (2016) affirmed, 'programs should take account of the motives that drive mentors to their decisions' (p. 113). This is important given that discussions regarding the benefit to students is usually limited to the literature on peer and youth mentoring (Dappen & Isernhagen, 2005; Jones, Doveston, & Rose, 2008).

Second, while mentors viewed their leadership experience as a valuable characteristic of an effective mentor, honing their mentoring skills was not addressed as a benefit of their mentoring. Mentors expressed the pedagogical gains acquired through their participation as a mentor in the residency program, but failed to express how their experience in mentoring might improve their roles in the future. In contrast, other researchers reported how mentors wanted to and needed to have a better understanding of their role as a mentor for quality learning to occur (Marcum-Dietrich et al., 2013; van Ginkel et al., 2016). In addition, Nolan and Molla (2017) reported that mentoring helped mentors become more confident in their roles from participating in a mentoring program.

Although the findings from our study identified the mentor's students as a focus for their desire to mentor, further research is needed to explore the benefits afforded to a mentor's students as a motivational factor in participating in a residency program. Findings also revealed that mentors perceived experience with roles of leadership as an important characteristic for mentoring. Exploring the notion of leadership roles is another area that should be examined to describe how this impacts the mentoring process.

The mentors in our study taught and learned alongside residents who were graduate students, many of whom had a previous occupation before pursuing a teaching career. Further research might explore the reciprocal learning dynamic in a residency program with undergraduate students and explore the psychosocial perspective present with residents who have more limited career experiences and/or may be younger in age. How do mentors benefit from undergraduate vs. graduate preservice teachers in a residency program? Findings from our study might be used to inform other residency programs regarding goals and expectations for mentors. For example, understanding a mentor's conceptualization of the mentoring process can be used to inform the development of a training model to encourage transformational mentoring (Brondyk & Searby, 2013) in a residency program. Mentors' perspectives may also be used to build mentor capacity to hone their leadership skills that may influence colleagues as well.

Understanding 'through mentoring that learning to teach is a laborious, time-consuming and reflective process' (Chitpin, 2011, p. 236) can serve as a reminder to mentors that enriching the professional life of another is worth the time invested in an effective mentoring relationship. In addition, documenting mentors' voices provide an authentic perspective of how their professional investment can also promote self-improvement (Garza et al., 2014).

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