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MENTORS' PERSPECTIVE ON MENTORING PRACTICES FOR NEW TEACHERS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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MENTORS' PERSPECTIVE ON MENTORING PRACTICES FOR NEW TEACHERS:

A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

MENTORS' PERSPECTIVE ON MENTORING PRACTICES FOR NEW TEACHERS:

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This qualitative phenomenological research study explores the lived experiences of mentors as they share their perceptions of mentoring practices to better understand how participatory experiences affect the professional growth of new teachers. Using a phenomenological research design helps to better understand the participants' perceptions and personal meaning making processes that emerge from their first-person lived experiences of their professional practice. This study explores how ongoing participatory experiences have served to shape one's perceptions about teaching and learning though the use of best mentoring practice strategies. To this end, this study triangulates the data by conducting an initial email interview questionnaire with nine mentors who have extensively engaged in the sharing of their best pedagogical practices with new teachers (mentees), and each is able to discuss their experiences in depth, through review of mentors' semi-structured interview questions responses, classroom observation reports, fieldnotes, follow-up interviews, and personal reflections.

This research adds to the current literature on the topic of mentoring practices for novice teachers by examining each mentors' experiences from a phenomenological perspective. This research also fills a gap in the existing literature as this specific topic is under-researched.

DEDICATION

First and foremost, I dedicate this work to the Holy Trinity: The Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit, for with them all things are possible. I dedicate this work also to my Heartbeats; my son, Jonathan; my daughter, Jennifer; my Guardian Angel parents, Homer and Charlotte Smith; and my Beloved Sister Cynthia (Pat). Each of these beloved kept me inspired and motivated as I traveled on this journey.

This dissertation study is also dedicated to numerous family members, friends, colleagues, mentors, Sorority Sisters, and the ladies of my accountability team: "Team Possible", who consistently provided me with words and deeds of encouragement.

Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to the many students, teachers, parents, and school administrators who may use this information to transform new teacher education. This work is for those who will critically and constructively listen to the voices of all who play such a crucial role in teacher education.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Public schools in the United States are experiencing a crisis in retaining novice teachers. Warsame and Valles in a mixed study conducted in 2018. According to Ronfeldt et al. (2013), 50% - 70% of novice teachers in the United States leave the school where they began working after five years. Podolsky et al. (2016) informs us that inadequate teacher preparation and a lack of support for new teachers are primary reasons for why teachers leave their profession.

Teacher retention through the use of effective support structures is a goal that has been reported by numerous researchers, universities, and school districts (Warsame & Valles, 2018). Simon Veeman (1984) examined ideas to support new teachers as they began their first year of teaching. Many educators and researchers have wrestled with this dilemma and continue to explore paths and strategies to offer needed support that may lead to teacher retention, and ultimately increase student success.

New teacher mentorship is of urgent importance for several reasons. Firstly, teaching is a complex and demanding profession that requires high skill and expertise. New teachers often need help with various classroom challenges, such as lesson planning, classroom management, and student engagement. A mentor can provide guidance, support, and constructive feedback, helping new teachers develop their skills and gain confidence in their abilities. Mentoring can also help reduce teacher burnout and turnover, which are significant problems in the field of education. By providing new teachers with the support they need, mentorship programs can help to retain talented educators in the profession, which is crucial for the long-term success of our educational

system. Investing in new teacher mentorship is essential for ensuring our schools are staffed with well-trained, committed, and effective educators. Further, the mentoring of novice teachers is emerging as a key factor in influencing the challenge of teacher retention. While ample evidence exists illustrating the importance of mentorship, and the best practices thereof, less information is known on how experienced teacher mentors make meaning of their role in the mentor relationship.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore teacher mentors' perspectives of best practices; that is those practices that mentors can provide evidence of successful outcomes for novice teachers in a graduate mentor support program. Additionally, this study explores the perceptions of mentors assigned to new teachers as these perceptions pertain to changes in the current mentoring programs, the possible limitations of the mentoring programs, and potential recommendations to improve outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

The Conceptual Framework that guides this study is The Danielson Framework for Teaching or FFT (2018). Integrating this theory provides substantial contexts for the induction and mentoring programs in grades K-12 and teacher education institutions. Although multiple teaching standards and observations rubrics exist, the Danielson's Framework for Teaching (FFT) is the most widely used teacher evaluation framework in the U.S. (Milanowski, 2011). Danielson's involvement in creating an observation assessment for new teacher licensure led to the development of the FFT in 1996

(Danielson, 2013). The FFT is widely recognized as an observation tool, but it was originally designed for broader purposes, to "Be a definition of good teaching, in all its complexity" (The Danielson Group, 2021) the FFT includes four domains, (1) Planning and Preparation, (2) The Classroom Environment, (3) Instruction, and (4) Professional Responsibilities.

The Danielson Framework for Teacher Evaluation (2018) is considered the most widely used conceptual framework both nationally and internationally. It is used in both graduate schools of education teaching programs as well as the New York City School districts to provide examples of successful teaching strategies and best practices. The Danielson Framework serves as an evaluation tool for both novice and veteran teachers, and it is one of the most widely used and researched models of teaching (NYSED, 2011).

In this study, the Danielson Framework for Teaching is used to inform and conceptualize the lived experiences and perceptions as themes generated from an iterative process of identifying activity, social structure, behavioral, and narrative codes as described by Bogdan & Biklen (2016) and Saldaña (2013). Data was captured using interviews, fieldnotes, and observation reports of active teacher mentors.

Figure 1

The Danielson Framework for Teaching
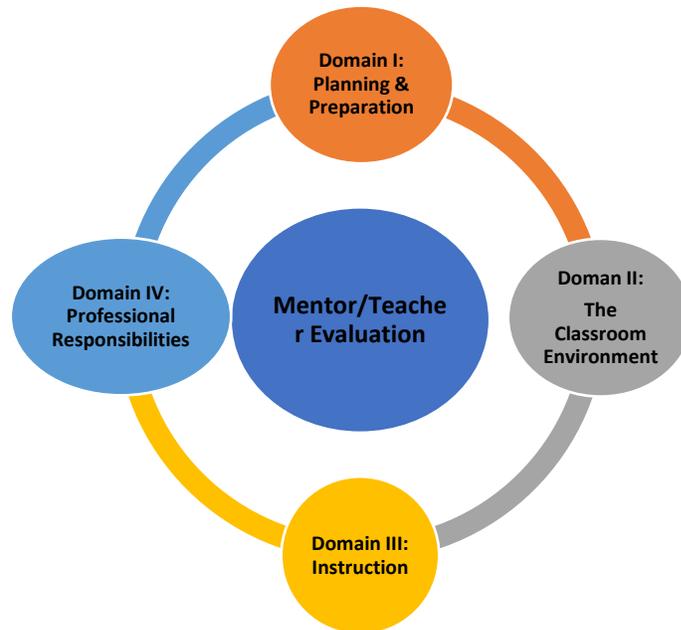
Adapted from The Danielson Framework for Teaching 2018

Significance of the Study

This proposed phenomenological study aims to investigate and make recommendations that may be useful for researchers who are studying the issue of novice teachers' support, and for practitioners who are concerned about the quality of mentoring strategies provided to new first-year teachers, based on current state mandates.

A report conducted by Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll, 2012, showed that 50% of beginning teachers dropped out of the teaching profession in the first five years of practice. A more recent study conducted by Podolsky et al. (2016) stated that national estimates show that new teachers leave at the rate of somewhere between 19% and 30%

over their first five years of teaching and that administrative support is an important factor most consistently associated with teacher's decisions to stay or leave a school.

Teacher recruitment and retention is a complicated phenomenon (Viadero, 2018). Viadero's study revealed that even with the 13 percent growth in the number of U.S. teachers over the past four years, far outpacing the 2 percent rise in student enrollment during the same period, teacher shortages are still very real and at a critical point. This urgency can have a range of negative impacts on student success, including a decline in the quality of education, lower academic achievement, and decreased engagement and motivation. Addressing teacher shortages, namely through enhancing support is crucial to ensure that all students have access to high-quality education and opportunities for success.

Recent research studies reveal that teachers leave the profession due to a variety of reasons, such as inadequate administrative support, difficult teaching loads owing to large class sizes, high numbers of special-needs students, complex schedules, and low pay. Many of these are exacerbated by the current teacher shortages. Other reasons include conflicts with colleagues, lack of support from students' families, low self-efficacy, and lack of job satisfaction (Cancio, Albrecht, & Johns, 2013; Clandinin et al., 2015; Huber et al., 2016; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

In the U.S. Department of Education's report, Projections of Education Statistics to 2018 it is noted that 29% of new teachers reported entering teaching through alternative certification programs (Hussar & Bailey, 2018). This report suggested that a major shift in the nature of teacher preparation, and perhaps, in the kinds of supports teachers require when they enter the classroom. With varying levels of hands-on

practical classroom experience, these new teachers can benefit from mentoring and coaching from experienced teachers or instructional coaches, professional development opportunities that focus on pedagogy, classroom management, and content knowledge, and ongoing feedback and support that help new teachers to improve their teaching practices over time.

It has also been noted that new teacher retention tends to be higher in well-resourced schools with more supportive administrators, higher levels of teacher collegiality, a mentoring program, and other supports for beginning teachers (Redding & Nguyen, 2020; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). Unfortunately, many novice teachers find jobs in these types of schools difficult to attain due to their inexperience.

To combat these issues, the New York State Department of Education (NYSED, 2015) implemented and mandated a new teacher mentoring program with the goal of developing and retaining quality teachers in the profession. Research is needed to show how mentoring practices for new teachers through mentors' perceptions can improve new teachers' self-efficacy, professional development, and retention.

Research studies also reveal that critical attributes of mentors include experience coaching and facilitating, keen observation skills, a wealth of experience working with diverse student populations, enthusiasm, and love for learning, as well as a commitment to collaboration (Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Moir, 2005).

Mentoring is most often defined as a professional relationship in which an experienced person (the mentor) assists another, less-experienced person (the mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the less-experienced person's

professional and personal growth. Mentoring is a best practice strategy in supporting new teachers in their first years of teaching and provides new teachers the proper support needed to transition from student teacher to novice teacher.

School districts nationwide have made efforts to reevaluate teacher mandated mentoring programs to prepare teachers for classroom effectiveness (Gless, 2012), including as of 2007, mandating mentoring for novice teachers in 45 states (NCTQ, 2007).

In the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) all first-year teachers with no prior teaching experience are mandated by the New York State Education Department (NYSED, 2015) to receive mentoring in their first year of teaching. Since 2015, all public-school employers are mandated to report all mentored experiences for the novice teachers they employ (NYSED, 2015). The purpose of the mentoring mandate is to provide novice or beginning teachers with support in order for these novices to gain skills and then transition successfully to their first professional experience under an initial certificate. Upon successful completion of a mentoring experience, novice teachers will then qualify for the professional certificate.

The research literature suggests skilled mentors help new teachers meet the many challenges of being a beginning or novice teacher (Feiman-Nemser 1983; Feiman-Nemser 2001; Gold 1996; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future 2003; Veenman 1984). The research summarizes the ideal role of mentoring as follows:

a) Mentors help new teachers decide what to teach and how to teach it, advising them about how to choose, adapt, or create appropriate materials and instructional practices.

b) Mentors help new teachers learn successful classroom management skills and access strategies for success with diverse academic and behavioral levels of students.

c) Mentors observe new teachers implementing lessons, model good teaching strategies, and share materials and ideas.

d) Mentors provide new teachers with "experience and expertise that focus on the central components of teaching: classroom instruction, curriculum, and lesson – planning, and classroom management" (Darling-Hammond 1999; Evertson & Smithey 2000; Feiman-Nemser 1983; Holloway 2001; Humphrey et al. 2000; Wilson et al. 2001).

A report conducted by Ingersoll (2012), showed that five percent of new teachers profession actually dropped out of the teaching profession in the first five years of practice. A more recent study by Morello (2014) showed that the teacher turnover rate in elementary and secondary schools is higher than ever, thus confirming that the beginning teacher dropout rate as a clear indication of the waste of resources invested in some teacher education programs (Moye, 2009).

A qualitative study conducted by Daly (2017), cited that formal mentoring practices is an under-researched area of study. Therefore, it is this researcher's aim to fill an important gap in this under-researched topic of study: new teacher mentoring. It is also this researcher's aim to expand on the existing research on the topic of new teacher

mentoring by exploring this phenomenon of current mentoring practices through the perceptions of teacher mentors. In addition, this researcher hopes to offer a significant contribution for practitioners and the research community through this study.

Connection with The St. John's University Vincentian Mission

In accordance with the St. John's University Vincentian Mission (2015), this research study of mentoring perceptions of mentoring practices of novice teachers reflects the social justice concerns of a University that seeks to serve the underserved. The study and its research questions can illuminate the critical importance of mentoring, not only of novice teachers in general, but also minority teachers in particular.

I will show in the findings in Chapter 4 how the values of truth, love, respect, opportunity, excellence, and service, as outlined in the Mission statement, seeks to empower new teachers and mentors to promote the inherent human dignity of all people, especially marginalized communities, by educating new teachers to cultivate relationships rooted in service, faith, and justice.

The objective for this study is to examine the perceived effect, from the viewpoint of teacher mentors, what effect the mentors believe mentoring practices have on the professional growth and development of new teachers, and to identify what mentors perceive as best practices that contribute to their mentees success as new teachers. In addition, this study may offer schools of education, district administrators, and the global community some practical recommendations for improving mentoring practices for new teachers.

Research Questions

In an effort to build a strong set of data to analyze for this qualitative study examining the perceived effect of mentoring practices on the professional growth and development of new teachers from the mentor's perspective, the following questions are offered to guide this study:

1. What are the mentors' perceptions of their current mentoring practices?

2. Which mentoring strategies do mentors perceive best support new teachers' (mentees) development and professional growth?

3. What recommendations do mentors suggest for improving the implementation and success of formal mentoring programs?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions represent an applicable list of terms and definitions provided to assist with understanding the terminology used in this study.

Formal Mentoring Program- A program that is focused on support, training, and retention of new teachers through a culture of professional growth (Wand, 2002)

*Master Teacher-*An exceptional practitioner who leads from the classroom and cultivates their peers' ability to deliver excellent instruction and increase student achievement.

Mentee- A current grade 7-12 teacher in a public school who received formal mentoring from a graduate school of education or school/district appointed mentor.

Mentor- Any former teacher/administrator who provided formal mentoring to a first-year teacher, who is now currently teaching in a 7-12 public school district over the course of that year.

New, Beginning, or Novice Teacher- A person new to or inexperienced in the field of education and teaching.

New Teacher Induction Program- In the context of this study, *new teacher induction program* collectively refers to a group of programs that offer guidance, orientation, and support for beginning teachers as they transition into a community of professional educators (Kearney, 2014: Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Professional Growth- Professional growth refers to gaining new skills and work experiences that can help one reach a goal in one's career. (Cote, 2020)

Self-Efficacy- The belief of an individual concerning their capacity to influence other events in their life (Bandura & Adams, 1977). Self-efficacy includes how a person thinks, feels, behaves, and motivates themselves to perform at certain levels (Bandura, 1994).

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

This chapter will focus on the background and definition of mentoring. It will describe what attention has been given to mentoring in education over the years through various studies with findings and limitations. This study will help the reader see the importance of the phenomenological study of mentors and their perspectives. All of this is set against the theoretical lens of Danielson's Framework for Teaching (FFT) which is discussed in depth in this chapter.

Mentoring Defined

Mentoring is described by Wong (2004) as a single person whose primary function is to help a new teacher. For a mentor program at school to be successful, Wong (2004) further explains that mentors within the program should understand the mission and goals of the district. In comparison, mentoring is defined by Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, and Tomlinson (2009) as "the one-to-one support of a novice or less experienced practitioner (mentee) by a more experienced practitioner (mentor), designed primarily to assist the development of the mentee's expertise and to facilitate their induction into the culture of the profession" (p.207).

Mentoring relationships serve as a resource for new teachers. Mentors provide support, resources, and camaraderie to new teachers who are at high risk of attrition (Hudson, 2013; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Mathipa and Matlable (2016) assert that the concept of mentoring can refer to acts of accompanying, respecting, collaborating, listening, and trusting in which the mentee, someone who needs assistance and support, is

entrusted into the hands of a well-informed and intelligent person who can formally and confidently provide guidance and help. (p, 37)

Furthermore, Mullen (2011) explains the role of a teacher mentor as one who provides new teachers with what they need to be successful in the position. For this study, I will use the following definitions of mentoring; 'a power-free, two-way, mutually beneficial learning situation in which the mentor provides advice, shares knowledge and experiences, and teaches using a low pressure, self-discovery approach' (Matt,1999) and 'the fundamental form of human development where one person invests time, energy and personal know-how in assisting the growth and ability of another person' (Shea, 1997).

A Brief History of Mentoring

The word mentor originated in mid-18th century via French and Latin from Greek *Mentõr*, the name of the adviser of the young Telemachus, Odysseus' son in Homer's *Odyssey*. (Shea, 1997) Odysseus, King of Ithaca, places Mentor in charge of safeguarding young Telemachus as he left to fight in the Trojan War. It was Mentor's task as King Odysseus' trusted friend, to help and guide Telemachus on his various quests. This once proper noun has evolved to now mean 'experienced and trusted advisor' according to the Oxford Dictionary. Centuries after Homer's work was written, the word mentor further evolved to mean trusted advisor, friend, teacher, and wise person (Roberts, 1999). Historically, there have been many examples of successful mentor and mentee partnerships of popular social record: Socrates and Plato, Plato, and Aristotle, Alexander the Great and Aristotle, Hayden and Beethoven, Freud and Jung, and more recent examples, Quincy Jones and Ray Charles, Warren Buffett and Bill Gates, Christian Dior

and Yves St. Laurent, Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg, Sir Freddie Laker and Richard Branson, Father Michael van de Peet and Mother Teresa (Dorobat, 2016).

Mentoring by experienced teachers can be incredibly beneficial for new teachers. When effective, mentoring by experienced teachers may offer guidance and support, helping new teachers to feel more confident and capable. Experienced teachers have a wealth of knowledge and expertise that they can share with new teachers. These include strategies and techniques for classroom management, lesson planning strategies, and assessment. In addition, mentor observations offer an opportunity for new teachers to receive constructive feedback on their teaching practices. These can help new teachers to identify areas for improvement and develop their teaching skills. Professional support including introducing new teachers to other educators in the school or district, helping them to build a professional network are also meaningful benefits. Further, the emotional needs of new teachers are of great concern. Teaching is often a challenging and stressful profession, and new teachers may experience feelings of isolation or burnout. Mentors can provide emotional support and encouragement, helping new teachers to stay motivated and engaged in their work. For these reasons, New York and many other states now mandate the completion of a formalized mentoring program for first year teachers.

New York State Mentoring Practices

In 2004, New York State passed a mentoring requirement as per the Commissioner's Regulations Section 100.2 (dd; New York State Education Department, 2005). The regulations stated that all New York State "teachers must complete a mentored experience in their first year of teaching" (New York State Education

Department, 2005, p.4). In conjunction with the law, New York State also implemented new provisions of Section 80-3 employing districts are now responsible to provide such mentoring to new teachers and must incorporate the design and planning of such mentoring experiences into the districts professional development plan" (New York State Department of Education, 2005, p.4). Other detailed requirements of this mentoring program mandated by this new legislation included: (a) a detailed measure of choosing mentors, (b) training and a preparation program for mentors, (c) a set of activities for the mentors and their novice teachers, and lastly, (d) a specific place and time for mentor activities.

As a response to the critical teacher shortage and new teacher attrition the New York State Legislature has appropriated $2 million per year for the Mentor Teacher-Internship Program (MTP) in support of defined efforts to mentor new teachers in public school districts and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) for the five-year period of 2018-2023. This program supports eligible school districts and BOCES in developing and providing structured guidance and assistance by experienced, highly qualified teachers (mentors) to beginning teachers (interns) in their first or second year of teaching. Of this grant New York City Public schools received $1,015.997 in funding for developing and implementation to address the 21st century needs of new teachers (NYSED, 2023)

Theoretical Framework

The literature review focused on The Danielson Framework for Teaching (2018).

Integrating this theorist provides substantial contexts for the induction and mentoring programs in K-12 and teacher education institutions.

The Danielson Framework for Teaching (2018) has been used for more than a decade by the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) for both teacher evaluation and professional development. It has also served for more than twenty years, since its development in 1996 as a teaching tool in many schools of education teacher preparation programs for methodology and training of new teachers (Johnson & Andrew, 2019). The Danielson Framework for Teaching offers an evaluation tool consisting of four specific domains: Planning and Preparation, The Classroom Environment; Instruction; and Professional Responsibilities. These domains are used as themes to help in the coding and data analysis. Each of these four domains has specifically defined sub-categories and thus outline the degrees to which a teacher demonstrates effectiveness in the delivery of instruction. (Danielson, 2018).

The Danielson Framework for Teaching is widely used for evaluating and improving teaching performance. Specific to new teacher mentorship, the framework can be an excellent resource for guiding new teachers through the complex and demanding process of becoming effective educators. The framework consists of four domains of teaching: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities.

Mentors use the framework to help new teachers set goals, develop lesson plans, and create a positive classroom environment. They also observe their teaching practices and provide constructive feedback on areas where they can improve. For example, in the Planning and Preparation domain, mentors may help new teachers create instructional

objectives, select appropriate materials, and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students. In the Classroom Environment domain, they assist new teachers in establishing a positive classroom culture, managing student behavior, and creating a safe and inclusive learning environment.

In the Instruction domain, mentors may help new teachers develop effective instructional strategies, monitor student learning, and provide timely feedback to students. Finally, in the Professional Responsibilities domain, this framing helps new teachers develop skills in communication, reflection, and collaboration with colleagues. The Danielson Framework for Teaching in a mentorship context provides new teachers with a structured approach to improving their teaching practices, setting goals, and monitoring their progress.

To offer a deeply nuanced understanding of the framework's development, it is important to consider the background of the framework's originator.

Charlotte Danielson

The biography and background of the creator of the FFT gives additional support to the credibility, authority, and relevance of this frame. An expert in the field, Charlotte Danielson began her career in education over 50 years ago as a teacher in a multi-age (1st and 2nd grade) classroom in Washington, D.C. From her first year in the classroom, she recognized the importance of encouraging students' natural intellectual curiosity and creating the conditions that allow them to engage with important concepts and content. Twenty-five years later (and almost 25 years ago), after working as a teacher, curriculum director, staff development director, and assessment designer, she wrote *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*.

Danielson's experience includes teaching at levels from kindergarten through university. In addition, she has worked as a curriculum director and staff development director and is the founder and board chair of The Danielson Group.

Currently, Danielson is an internationally recognized expert in teacher effectiveness. She advises State Education Departments and National Ministries and Departments of Education. She is in demand as a keynote speaker at national and international conferences, and as a policy consultant to legislative and administrative bodies. She has published widely on the use of her framework and related aspects of the teaching professional and instructional practice. Among other things, she's written about organizing schools for student success (*Enhancing Student Achievement: a Framework for School Improvement*, 2002), teacher leadership (*Teacher Leadership that Strengthens the Profession*, 2006), professional conversations (*Talk about Teaching! Conducting Professional Conversations*, 2009), and numerous practical instruments and training programs, both onsite and online, to assist practitioners in implementing important ideas about teaching.

Danielson's cumulative expertise both academically and professionally adds a level of legitimacy to the framework that is valued by educators. The Danielson Framework or FFT, as it has come to be called, has become the most widely used instructional framework in the United States. She and her team have collaborated with educators using the framework in 45 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, The U.S. Virgin Islands, and 12 other nations, including Canada, Colombia, Lebanon, Spain,

Chile, and Thailand. (Danielson, 2021). The FFT has evolved since 1996, with the following updates:

- 1996 - the Framework for Teaching (FFT) was developed to promote clear and meaningful conversations about effective teaching practices.

- 2003 - Charlotte Danielson brought 12 other educators and experts to launch the Danielson Group, a group of consultants committed to realizing the potential of the FFT.

- 2007 - the 2nd edition of the Framework for Teaching was released with updated components, elements, and rubrics that reflected learning and research over a decade of implementation.

- 2012 - Research from the University of Chicago's Consortium of School Research and the measures of Effective Teaching study demonstrated the connection between the FFT.

- 2013 - The Danielson Group published the FFT Evaluation Instrument, which was adopted, approved, or adapted by 31 states and over half of the country's 20 largest school districts.

- 2017 - The Framework for Teaching Clusters was published as a companion tool to the FFT to further support teacher reflection, professional conversations, and instructional coaching.

- 2018 - The Danielson Group relaunched as a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the principles of the FFT to ensure each educator and student experiences a safe and inclusive learning environment that promotes joyful inquiry, efficacy, intellectual rigor, and reflection.

- 2021 - marked the 25th anniversary of the FFT's release and developed the FFT Indicator Rubric for Remote Teaching and Learning
- 2022 - The Danielson Group celebrates the 25 anniversary of the FFT with the release of the third edition, updated components, a new rubric, and tools to support teacher growth and development.

The Danielson Framework Purpose and its Uses

The (FFT) is considered a common language for teachers and a vision of instructional excellence. Its resources support teacher professional learning across the career continuum – from the pre-service teacher preparation through teacher leadership and beyond.

The FFT and its supporting resources have been used in millions of classrooms worldwide. The Danielson Group (DG) has partnered with over 1,500 organizations worldwide and has directly supported educators in 45 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Outside of US, The Danielson Group has worked in over 15 countries to date including schools and ministries in Canada, Lebanon, Colombia, Mexico, Jamaica, West Indies, among others.

The Danielson Group takes pride and honor in its work across incredibly diverse settings with partners who are dedicated to building more equitable and just classrooms and schools (The Danielson Group, 2023).

Its partners include schools, districts, state agencies, universities, and others who use the FFT and have worked with the Danielson Group to strengthen professional practice, elevate great teaching, and inspire a shift from evaluation towards growth. The partnerships range from initial adoption of the FFT to building capacity within districts

and schools to completely designing (or redesigning) systems of professional learning and support. The network of FFT users continues to grow, and the Danielson Group makes its core resources freely available beyond their direct partnerships.

Significance of the Danielson Framework for Teaching

The framework holds professional and personal significance that impacts this study. The FFT is a core evaluation tool used in my own practice as an urban schoolteacher and leader since 2002. The utility of the FFT is apparent in mentoring, instructional coaching, teacher professional development, and teacher evaluation. Further, the FFT has also been used to promote professional conversations among colleagues and mentees to develop and enhance the science of teaching through smaller learning communities. The FFT is a guide that makes state standards concrete for pre-service and new teachers. When explained, modeled, and monitored the FFT has been extremely successful in assisting and helping novice teachers understand the concept of "good teaching" (Danielson, 2018).

The Danielson Framework for Teaching offers a guide for any educator but especially those at the beginning of their careers. The FFT categorizes key areas of teaching that have been identified through research as areas that actively advance student achievement. The FFT divides teaching into twenty-two components and 76 smaller elements. These components are then clustered into four major domains outlined as: *planning and preparation*, *classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities* (Danielson, 2018).

Though each component is distinct, they are related to one another within the domain. For example, Domain 1: Planning and Preparation is divided into six

components that measure the concepts and skills that are central to each discipline. For example, Domain 1a: Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy measures by levels (1 - 4) a teacher's familiarity with important concepts and skills necessary to plan appropriate lessons and activities that guides student learning. Each component provides teachers and rating supervisors specific indicators and suggested examples using a rubric that rates teachers' knowledge of each component as follows:

- Level 1 - Ineffective/Unsatisfactory

- Level 2 - Basic/Developing

- Level 3 - Proficient/Effective

- Level 4 - Distinguished/highly effective.

What is important for success in using the FFT is that educators familiar with the document will recognize much in the philosophy of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that is like the underlying concepts of the Framework. In addition, the FFT has provided educators the ability to develop a community of learners, in which students assume a large part of the responsibility of the success in their learning process, where students can make suggestions, initiate improvements, monitor their own learning against clear standards, and can serve as resources to one another (Danielson, 2018).   In offering this Framework with its scaled rubric in each component of each Domain, provides a clear guide in teachers' professional development, teacher rating, and monitoring student achievement (Danielson, 2018).

The FFT's Use in the New York City Public School System

In an urban school system, where teachers often face a wide range of challenges, using the Danielson Framework for Teaching can help to ensure that teachers are well-

equipped to meet the needs of all students. By providing a clear and comprehensive set of standards for teaching performance, the framework can help to improve teaching quality, increase student achievement, and ultimately, support the success of urban schools and their communities. Resources as outlined in the FFT support teachers and school leaders with identifying next steps for a priority area connected to the components of the FFT. Each resource includes component-specific "ask abouts" which focus on each of the component's elements, and which can be used to support professional conversations such as (but not limited to) pre-observation conferences, post-observation conferences, and feedback conversations. Each resource also includes a component-specific Instructional Next Steps Idea Bank and a set of questions that teachers and school leaders can use frame their collaborative discussion around identifying, implementing, and evaluating next steps.

The FFT and Mentoring

Evidence from a research report conducted by Podolsky et al. (2016) offers state and federal policy recommendations on possible methods to train and support new teachers which the FFT provides. Researchers suggests that states and districts, with federal government support should invest in high-quality mentoring and induction programs, which have been shown to increase retention, accelerate novice teachers' professional learning, and improve student achievement. These researchers strongly suggest that special attention should be paid to selecting and training expert mentors and providing adequate release time to allow mentors and beginning teachers to engage in a full range of instructional support activities, such as classroom observations, coaching, shared lesson planning, and reflection.

Funding has always been a strong argument in opposition to the cost of providing high quality mentoring and induction programs but, it has been researched that states have the wherewithal to leverage funds through Title II of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 to fund this effort: developing and implementing induction and support programs that will produce more successful teachers who will remain in teaching.

Review of Related Literature

It has been shown that strong mentoring and induction programs for novice teachers can be a valuable strategy to retain new teachers and improve their effectiveness. Well-mentored beginning teachers are twice as likely to stay in teaching as those who do not receive mentoring (Espinoza et al., 2018). Likewise, between 19% and 30% of new teachers over their first five years of teaching would leave teaching due to lack of administrative support (Podolsky et al. 2016). Both studies pointed to new teacher mentoring practices as one of the determining factors that would help states build long-term sustainable systems to attract, develop, and retain a strong and stable teacher workforce. (Espinoza et al., 2018).

An exploratory case study of three female middle school mentors, conducted by Marsha Sowell, outlines a three-element mentoring model that includes: establishing a trusting relationship between mentor and mentee; supporting and guiding the mentee in creating an environment that is supportive to learning; and supporting and guiding the mentee with instructional strategies appropriate to the content and context of the classroom as critical for helping to retain new teachers (Sowell, 2017). Sowell's study supports the use of an evaluative tool for supporting new teachers.

The Danielson Framework for Teaching provides an outline with examples for both mentors and mentees to follow and for mentors as well as school supervisors to assess and evaluate teacher and student performance.

In support of the pros of mentoring for new teachers, findings of a 2019 quantitative study focusing on 289 new teachers in an urban school district in the Southwestern United States over a three-year period of schools participating in a mentoring program showed that mentoring practices proved beneficial in reducing new teacher attrition in hard-to-staff schools (Wiens, Chou, Valet, & Beck,2019). This quantitative data suggests that mentoring practices were more likely to see an increase in teacher retention and a reduction in teacher attrition rates. In addition, this study might imply that teachers' retention can improve student learning during their first three years of teaching (Attebery et al., 2015).   Wiens et al, 2019, further state that this study may benefit from qualitative research for further analysis of the participants' experiences and also to focus on the programs' impact on student learning and outcomes.

One of the most important aspects of the new teacher experience has to do with the overall mentoring program that new teachers experience. In a single case study that focused on the experiences of one new White teacher in the Teach for America program during her first two years of teaching as a third-grade teacher in an urban elementary school in a predominately Hispanic neighborhood in Southwest, USA, demonstrated the importance of mentoring practices on teacher self-efficacy (Knight-McKenna, Esposito, & Clement, 2017).

In this case study, Lindsey (pseudonym), during her first year of teaching, was assigned to a school that was 99% Hispanic (650 students pre-K through 5); 94% free or

reduced lunch; and 84% students were labeled "at risk". Of the forty-two teachers: 69% were female and 31% were male, 48% were Hispanic, 33% were Caucasian, 12% African American, and 7% Asian. The teachers at Ditmas Elementary School (pseudonym) had an average of ten years teaching experience and the school boasted of high standardized test scores: 84% of students meeting reading standards and 87% meeting math standards. As stated in the article, most districts mandate that all first-year teachers such as Lindsey are assigned a school-based mentor.

Often the school-based assigned mentor is usually tenured with several years of teaching experience under their belts, is positioned on-site to address issues that may arise immediately and provides a sounding board for the novice when they need an understanding ear. Furthermore, new teachers in most teacher education programs are assigned a faculty member to support them as well. This mentor is often a retired master teacher or former school supervisor who has worked with both new and veteran teachers over the course of their careers (Knight-Mckenna et al., 2017). The Danielson Framework for Teaching Theory (See Figure 1) provides many school districts with a useful framework for developing and evaluating new teachers (Danielson, 2018).

Research by Hong and Matsko (2019) focused on the interactions between formal mentors and novice or new teachers and the setting in which these interactions occurred. In this study, researchers analyzed data that included the Elementary School Teacher Survey collected by University of Chicago Consortium on School Research in 2005 and supplemented by Chicago Public Schools (CPS) administrative records as they focused on new teachers' organizational commitment as the key outcome and focus on its affective aspects through mentoring. Organizational commitment is defined by Meyer &

Allen (1991) as emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the school.

Since empirical research has supported a positive relationship between mentoring in general and mentees' organizational commitment, especially affective commitment (e.g., Brown, Zablah, & Bellenger, 2008; Curtis & Taylor, 2018; Payne & Huffman, 2005), researchers Hong and Matsko looked both inside and outside of teacher mentoring and examined potential mentoring features that might influence beginning teachers (Hong et al 2019). The three features that were viewed were amount and frequency of mentor-mentee interactions, mentoring content, and mentoring approach.

In support of amount and frequency of mentor-mentee interactions, data was analyzed from a mentoring program mandated by the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) by Rockoff (2008) finding that with mentoring increased by 10 hours per year, beginning teachers' rating of their mentors rose by 0.19 standard deviations, absences decreased by 0.2 days, and their students achievement improved by 0.05 standard deviations in math, and by 0.04 standard deviations in reading; and all changes were statistically significant.

Regarding content mentoring or focusing on the specific needs of the mentees, a study conducted by Grossman et al (2012) of the implementation of a mentoring program in New York City, found that mentoring guidance was provided to diverse content areas with moral support emphasized the most: however, teachers desired most the support in the areas of classroom management and instruction planning. Empirical evidence asserts that pedagogical content knowledge is not always well developed in beginning teachers and that subject-specific mentoring can significantly improve their instructional belief

and practices (Luft, 2012). In addition, in a qualitative study by Athanases & Achinstein (2003), a particular emphasis was placed on individual student learning and demonstrated the importance of helping beginning teachers to address the varied needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse student population.

The mentoring approach, or the how a mentor engages their new teacher(s) in professional learning is the third feature in this study. Research shows that novice teachers benefit greatly from meaningful hands-on experiences with practices that can take on various forms of interaction that are around an artifact of learning, including lesson observation (both of and by the novice) with feedback, analysis of student work together, lesson co-planning, and so on (Desimone et al., 2014). A mentoring approach that provides these types of learning experiences, which Hong and Matsko defines as engagement with teaching practices, allows novices to contribute ideas, ask questions, try out teaching strategies, receive feedback, and reflect on their own practices.

In an interpretive qualitative research study (Merriman, 2009) conducted by Lindsey Wexler (Wexler, 2020), mentees reflected on their mentoring experiences through mentor's observations, weekly journals, weekly focus questions, lesson plans, mentor/mentee dialogues, and a semi-structured interview. Coding parameters guided by Saldaña (2009) served to outline codes, categories, and themes that addressed mentoring experiences offered to first year teachers. This literature also guided the data analysis approach and triangulation of the data sources.

Conclusion

In summary, the available research, including journal articles, books, and websites, articulates favorable viewpoints of mentoring. In general, overall mentoring

has been shown to have a positive impact on teacher professional growth, retention, and student outcomes. This enormous body of literature suggests that although there is a tremendous variety in both the quantity and quality of new teacher mentoring, there is a need for additional qualitative research and empirical data that suggests which specific mentoring practices are perceived as most effective by skilled mentors. This study aims to explore the lived experiences of mentors as they share their perceptions of best mentoring practices to better understand how participatory experiences affect the professional growth of new teachers, may assist in teacher retention, and can result in positive student outcomes.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methods and procedures employed in this study. The research questions, research design sample, data collection procedures, instruments, and methods for data analysis are presented. Understanding the context of this study must include the use of the FFT within the COVID-19 global pandemic. In 2021 the Framework for Teaching Indicator Rubric for Remote Teaching and Learning was developed to address virtual teaching in each of the four domains. (Danielson Group, 2021). As all participants throughout our education systems have been impacted to varying degrees, the results are further discussed in how data is collected and analyzed.

Several districts have been cautious in admitting visitors to their buildings and had moved most daily instruction as well as mentoring support to the online platforms, while others reopened with several safety precautions and physically distancing procedures in place. This "new normal" changed the professional practice of all participants, as was discussed in every interview, thus I accessed data through email and the secured CISCO Systems Webex platform. It was not possible for as instrument to gain access to any research site for the purpose of viewing mentor and mentee debriefing sessions because of the restrictions set by the school administrators and the district superintendent therefore, I depended on participants' interviews, mentoring documents, and artifacts to understand the phenomenon of mentoring new teachers.

Research Questions

As stated previously, the purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to identify, explore, and review mentors' perspectives of best practices as they relate to teacher education mentoring strategies from a graduate support program. Additionally,

these assigned mentors' perceptions as they pertain to the mentoring programs that they have access to, the possible limitations of the mentoring programs, and potential recommendations to improve outcomes. As such, I followed the qualitative research methodology and followed through on that methodology so that three research questions were explored and answered:

1. What are the mentors' perceptions of their current mentoring practices?

2. Which mentoring strategies do mentors perceive support mentees' development and professional growth?

3. What recommendations do mentors suggest for improving the implementation and success of formal mentoring programs?

Methods and Procedures of Data Collection

This study is a phenomenologically qualitative study. After receiving the St. John's University Institutional Review Board (SJIRB) approval, I proceeded to next steps to begin the study. I first reviewed the Participants' Background Interview Form and the Participants' Interview Questions Form and then placed them on google docs for easy access for the participants and retrieval by me. Next, I piloted the questionnaire with a small group of peers familiar with my research to further refine the documents.

Quantitative methods would certainly offer the data in numbers, but only "the descriptive nature of a qualitative approach allows to build a complex, holistic picture in a natural setting" (Creswell, 2018). Phenomenological study characterizes and describes the common phenomenon and should be used because it helps us to understand the meaning of people's lived experiences. In addition, a phenomenological study explores what people experienced and focuses on their experience of a phenomena (Creswell,

2018). This would involve a sampling strategy of a homogenous group of mentors from the same school of education to better understand the characteristics of their lived experiences needed for the study.

Setting

The setting for this phenomenological study were various secondary schools within the New York City School system. It included K-8, middle and junior high, and high schools. The mentor participants selected had access to a variety of types of setting configurations and the researcher as instrument gained access through the lived experiences of each mentor. It should also be noted that all participants involved in this study are employed as mentors at accredited graduate schools of education.

Participants

I am an adjunct of the graduate school of education used to secure a purposive sample of participants and was able to gain access to a list of prospective participants by outreaching to the director of the Alternative Certification Program at a prestigious private university in urban New York City. Of the 25 requests sent by me, 9 agreed to participate. I have worked collegially with each of the participants and also have a personal rapport with 5 out of 9 participants.

This purposive sample included 9 mentors in secondary school settings ascertained through a listing of current mentors from the Director of the Alternative Certification Program at a suburban university. The mentors were selected, as mentioned previously, based on having been designated or labeled as a mentor by the school of education alternative certification program, having taught for at least five years, and having mentored for at least three years (See Figure 2).

Table 1

Participants' Background and Experience

Participant	Ethnicity	Gender F: Female M: Male	Years of Teaching Experience	Grade levels taught	Supervisory Experience	Years of Mentoring Experience	Mentoring Practices	
							Subject (s)	Grade level (s)
Participant A Ross	White	M	48	College 9-12	Adjunct Principal	6	ELA Humanities Soc. Studies	College 9-12
Participant B Christy	White	F	32	College 7-9	Adjunct Assist. Prin.	10	Math	College 7-12
Participant C Linda	White	F	25	College 7-12	Adjunct Assist. Prin. Consultant	8	Math	College 7-12
Participant D Michael	White	M	53	College 7-12 5-6	Adjunct Principal	40	ELA Humanities, Math Science Social Studies	College 7-12 Primary
Participant E Harriet	White	F	54	College 7-12 Primary	Adjunct Principal Buddy Tr.	44	ELA Humanities, Math Science Social Studies	College 7-12 Primary
Participant F Jack	White	M	52`	College 6 -12	Adjunct Principal	20	Math	College 6-12
Participant G Diane	Black	F	49	College 6 -8	Adjunct Assist. Prin.	33	ELA Humanities, Math Science Social Studies	College 6-8
Participant H Mary	Hispanic	F	32	College 7-12	Adjunct Assist. Prin. Consultant	10	Special Ed. Pre-K - 12	College PreK -12
Participant I Rene	Black	F	39	College 4-12	Adjunct Principal Consultant	20	ELA Humanities Special Ed.	College 4-12

All nine of the mentors in this study work in urban, low-socio-economic schools throughout New York City with diverse cultural populations. These mentors have a range of 25 to 52 years of experience in education, 10 – 44 years of mentoring experience, and have been designated as a mentor by a teaching university and/or district.

Of the eight participants: five are males and three are females; six are White, two are Black, and one is Latino; all are currently college adjuncts working with both new teachers and student teachers; two are private educational consultants; and one has a specialization in Special Education. Additionally, all mentors are offered professional development twice a year by the university and also seek professional development through a variety of networking opportunities and professional organizations. The University also encourages the mentors to buddy or form collaborative relationships and these mentors are challenged by both the university and the individual schools' administrative team to offer support to new teachers utilizing the latest researched methods. All use the Danielson Framework for Teaching in varying forms for new teacher evaluation.

Data Collection Procedures

After receiving approval from St. John's University's Institutional Review Board (SJU IRB), and upon receiving affirmative feedback from my research peers, I then contacted Potential participants by email to request their participation and included the SJU IRB Participants Consent Form.

After I received 9 affirmative responses with the completed and signed SJU IRB Consent Form, I forwarded the Participants Background Form (APPENDIX D) to each participant to ensure that each met the criteria for the study:

1. having at least five years of teaching experience,

2. three years of mentoring experience in a secondary school setting,

3. is currently working as a mentor for a school of education program for new teachers.

Upon verification that all criteria were satisfied, I forwarded each participant a link to the Mentors' Interview Questionnaire (James, 2007). I chose to email the interview questions prior to the taped interview because I believed that it would provide the participants' the time to think critically about their responses. When each participant returned the completed Interview Questionnaire, I then sent each a thank you email that also included a request that they choose possible dates at their convenience for their availability to then participate in an audio interview for follow-up and clarification. In this email, I again reminded each of the confidentiality clause that had been presented in the SJU IRB Participants' Consent Form. In addition, I included my telephone number and asked if they had any questions or concerns, they could contact me directly.

Next, with the support of my mentor, I chose to use the CISCO Systems Webex Platform to conduct my audio interviews because Webex both records and offers transcription services at no cost. Each of my participants expressed excitement about supporting me in my work. During the interviews I took notes to begin some initial coding. As the researcher, I was both extremely excited and somewhat apprehensive as I entered this phase of research. Excited because due to the awesome nature of the task before me and apprehensive of what information I might find during live interviews. I also had to review the interview process in an article on videoconference interviews for qualitative data collection (Seidman, 2014) in order to ensure that I remained unbiased in my approach.

Once participants responded to confirm their agreement to participate in the study, I send each a thank you email for agreeing to participate and included the SJU IRB Participants' Consent Form (APPENDIX C). Upon receiving the signed SJUIRB

Participants' Consent Form through email, I immediately contacted each participant through email to explain the next steps of the interview process. This process included a Google Docs link to the Interview Questions for Mentor Participants (APPENDIX E) for completion and return within a one-week period and the request for participants to schedule a 30–45-minute taped interview at their convenience. Accompanying these next steps were the three (3) research questions for the participants to ponder and also respond to in the taped interview.

As stated earlier the next steps of the study included sending each participant a Mentor Inquiry Form to complete and return via email (See Appendix D). This 12-item questionnaire, developed by me, served to ascertain participating mentors' background and history of mentoring practice. In addition, the Mentor Inquiry Form's overall purpose was to confirm that each participant met the specific criterion necessary for the study; a) has taught successfully for five or more years in a secondary education setting, b) has been labeled as a mentor by a school district or accredited school of education program, and c) has mentored for at least three years.

The 13-item semi-structured interview questionnaire developed by me on Google Docs (See Appendix E) was emailed to each after receiving a signed SJU IRB Consent Form. In accordance with James, 2007, the purpose of sending the interview questions to each mentor prior to the taped interview hoped to allow for a smoother interview process for both my participants and me. This process afforded each participant the opportunity to think, edit, and revise responses before uploading and returning them through Google Docs to me. In addition, this process provided participants the opportunity to respond in writing to the interview questions in advance affording me an

opportunity to review the responses and develop any follow-up questions that might need to be asked during the recorded interview for clarification. It also provided the participants the opportunity to reach out to me by email, text, or telephone prior to the taped interview for any clarifications and questions as well as to add any additional information that could be helpful to me for a more thorough understanding of the participants' experience, such as anecdotals.

Next, I scheduled recorded interviews with each participant using a secured CISCO Systems Webex platform. The secured Webex platform both recorded and transcribed each interview. In accordance with Moustakas (1994), the interview began with a social conversation between the participant and me to create a comfortable climate for the participant to respond honestly and comprehensively. It must be noted that this part of the conversation was not taped. I then informed each participant the recording would then begin after the prompt announcement of the beginning of the recording session.   I altered some questions as a follow up to the participants' responses (Moustakas, 1994). Each participant had the opportunity to ask me questions and discuss relevant topics informally throughout the interview. In addition, I asked each participant to share his/her response to the three research questions:

RQ1. What are the mentors' perceptions of their current mentoring practices?

RQ2. Which mentoring strategies do mentors perceive support mentees' development and professional growth?

RQ3. What recommendations do mentors suggest for improving the implementation and success of formal mentoring programs?

From the interview questions, I was able to gain a better understanding of the mentors' daily experiences in both face-to-face and virtual settings. These interview taped virtual interview sessions lasted between 30 – 45 minutes. During the interviews, I demonstrated an attentive, courteous, respectful posture. At the end of each interview, I thanked the participants for their time and valued contribution to the study. Afterwards, I reviewed each interview and transcript to prepare for coding and data analysis.

Documents

Each participant sent documents and artifacts as part of the data collection. According to Creswell & Poth (2018), the researcher needs to define the purpose of using the documents and requires adequate time to review the materials. Documents included: samples of mentoring fieldnotes, journal entries, written observations, classroom descriptions and seating charts with anecdotals, and mentees final reflections. These materials were requested by me to assist in helping me better understand the lived experiences of the mentor. Each participant was instructed to redact any identifying information from all documents and then email them in PDF form to me. All personal information of the mentor, mentee, and schools' name was redacted to ensure confidentiality and to protect privacy. All Mentors were given pseudonyms.

Since phenomenology can be like a participant observation study, the researcher is an instrument in this study and needed to build a professional relationship with each participant being studied, to assess how each interprets or perceives the common phenomena, i.e., mentoring practices.

Semi-structured interviews are considered the best way to collect data for interpretative phenomenological analysis due to the flexibility afforded to the interviewer

to adapt to the participant's responses in order to gain the most interesting and important information (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). This 13- item semi-structured interview questionnaire (Appendix B) was sent to ascertain each participants personal experience with their mentees during the mentoring process. The secured taped interview assisted me in clarifying each participant's responses and offered an opportunity for the participant to share any unique experiences as well as other information that might add to the study.

Analysis of Interviews

The data from the interviews was analyzed through the approach laid out by Moustakas (1994), which provides a practical and useful approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018, Moustakas, 1994). This study uses Moustakas's (1994) heuristic process in phenomenological analysis to extract common themes across the data collected. In the first step, I described firsthand experiences with mentoring new teachers. I had the opportunity to engage in an epoche or bracketing process, setting aside prejudgments and preconceived experiences of the mentoring phenomenon.

In the second step, I reviewed the audio tapes and transcripts to find statements in the interview describing the participants' experiences with the topic. Next, I conducted horizontalization of the data, by developing a list of nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statements. In the third step, I looked for clusters of meaning or themes in the data (Creswell & Poth (2018).

Coding Process

While looking for patterns and clusters of meaning, I conducted a first round of coding using descriptive coding. This task involved assigning labels, a word, or a phrase to summarize relevant information from an interview transcript. On the second cycle,

pattern coding was used to identify repetitive phrases that would help the development of major themes from the data (Creswell & Poth 2018). I then looked for repetitive phrases that demonstrate participants' knowledge, beliefs, cultural background, instructional practices, and personal and professional development. Saldaña, (2014) states that during the coding process, the researcher organizes and groups similar coded data into categories. Towards the end of the coding process themes manifested. The overall goal was to develop an overarching theme that weaved various themes together into a narrative.

After the first three steps were conducted, the narrative developed. I created a textural description of participants' experiences describing ***what*** happened and included their examples verbatim. Next, I drafted a structural description of ***how*** the experience happened. Here, I reflected on the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced (Creswell & Poth,2018, Moustkas,1994).

Observation Protocol

Human beings are natural observers. It is through observation that we can make sense of the world around us (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For this study, I used the mentors' fieldnotes, anecdotals, observation reports, and mentees reflections supplied by the participants as additional data sources for triangulation. According to Creswell & Poth (2018), as a nonparticipant, I reviewed these documents and use member checking to determine their validity. This allowed me to experience the phenomenon through the mentors' perceptions. Specific incidents and actions can be used as reference points for further discussion with the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

As a method of gathering data, I recorded descriptive and reflective notes utilizing a t-chart format (Appendix F) during as well as after reviewing the WebEx sessions.

The descriptive notes consisted of details about the participants, setting, and activities/behaviors of the participants. In addition, I incorporated reflective comments that revealed thoughts or feelings about what the participant had experienced. These notes were utilized later to develop thematic connections (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Lastly, because taking notes can be overwhelming, I remained focused on the participants' responses to each research question.

This data was coded using the narrative coding process to describe the structure of mentoring perceptions of mentors (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). Participants were encouraged to share their mentoring experiences and I analyzed and coded their individual responses and then compared the results to find common codes, themes, and categories.

The analysis also considered Saldaña's (2015) coding techniques of code mapping and code weaving. The analysis of the following data: sources questionnaire interviews, follow-up Web-Ex interviews, mentors' fieldnotes, anecdotal, reflections, journals entries, and observation reports served to both facilitate and validate triangulation.

Lastly, I wrote a composite description that captured the "essence" or the common experiences of the participants. Through this analysis approach, I was able to construct meaning of how the mentors perceived that their practices supported the professional development and growth of the new teacher and to offer recommendations to improve the process.

Trustworthiness of the Design

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), because of the applied nature of most social science inquiry, it is imperative studies are conducted with trustworthiness – was the study performed in an ethical manner? For the intended study, I used the evaluative criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985) to establish trustworthiness of the study. Lincoln and Guba utilize terms that are more aligned to naturalistic research (Creswell & Poth, 2016). These terms include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To further develop these components of validation, I used the following strategies: (1) triangulation, (2) member checking, (3) thick description, (4) external audit, and (5) reflexivity.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence in the 'truth' of the findings. *Triangulation* is a strategy for corroborating evidence and ensuring the depiction of the phenomenon is accurate (Creswell & Poth, 2016). To triangulate means to find the connection between two to three data sources to determine common themes. Because a single method can never adequately portray the phenomenon, it is necessary to include multiple data sources that provide rich detail of the lived experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This study utilized data from interviews, observations, and mentors' documents to triangulate.

Member checking, also known as respondent validation, is another strategy for ensuring credibility. Prior to sending google doc forms to consenting participants, two of my research colleagues were asked to review and complete each form to check for accuracy and clarity. Both colleagues complied and assisted me in making minor adjustments to both forms. In addition, all participants were asked to review the data

analysis to determine whether it accurately represented their experience. Member-checking is "the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstanding of what you observed" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Maxwell, 2013).

Transferability

Transferability refers to how the findings of the study are applicable to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By providing a detailed account of the experience, it can be determined if the findings are relevant to other groups of people, settings, situations, and times (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To achieve "rich detail", the researcher immediately reviewed the collected data to add further details based on notetaking during the process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Dependability

I facilitated an external audit where the process and product of the study was evaluated for accuracy by a person not affiliated with the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The auditor examined the findings, interpretations, and conclusions to determine if supported by the evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, I established an audit trail by maintaining a journal of the process including reflections, questions, decisions made regarding issues, or ideas that surface while collecting evidence (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings of the study are based on the participant's perspectives and not the researcher's personal beliefs, motivation, or

interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure confirmability I utilized the reflexivity technique. I maintained a reflexive journal that consisted of regular entries during the research process. The entries included reflections on decisions made regarding methods and planning during the research and analysis process. In addition, recorded personal thoughts on values and interests.

Research Ethics

In 1979, the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research produced the *Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research*. This report identified three basic ethical principles for conducting research involving human subjects. The principles include Respect for Persons (Autonomy), Beneficence, and Justice (Seidman, 2013). Birthing from the *Belmont Report* was the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Part 46 which regulated the use of human subjects for research (Seidman, 2013). The regulations require various institutions and organizations that conduct human research to establish a local Institutional Review Board (IRB). The sole purpose of IRBs is to ensure the rights and welfare of human participants are protected.

Respect for Persons

To respect human subjects is to recognize their rights - their right to be informed about the study, the right to participate or not, and the right to withdraw (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2000). Once IRB approval was granted by St. John's University IRB Committee, I began recruiting participants. Participants were solicited utilizing the approval of a school of education administrator. An email request was sent to each potential participant. Those willing to participate and had met the established criteria

were selected. Once selected, the participants received the consent form (Appendix D) Procedures, Risks/Discomforts of Participating, Benefits of Participating, Confidentiality, Fees, Right to Refuse or Withdraw, Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns.

Where necessary, I provided opportunities for the participants to ask questions about the consent form to ascertain full understanding though email, phone call, and/or text. Because individuals were contacted outside of the school setting, building/district level approval was not required. The Consent for Participation Form included the following sections: Introduction, Purpose of the Study, Description of the Study Procedures, Risks/Discomforts of Participating, Benefits of Participating, Confidentiality, Fees, Right to Refuse or Withdraw, Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns. Where necessary, I provided an opportunity for the participants to ask questions about the consent form to ascertain full understanding.

Beneficence

Beneficence refers to exercising a moral obligation to protect the welfare of the participants. Basically, the goal is to ensure no harm comes to the participants. To protect the identity of the participants, assigned each participant a letter: A through E and are referenced by pseudonyms in all written documentations. I secured a master list of the participants for verification purposes. In addition, participants had the right to approve or disapprove the use of quotations in written publications. I also assured confirmability by maintaining a reflexive journal detailing decisions and thoughts during the research process. Lastly, the interview time was suggested and confirmed by the participant. I asked for approval from each participant to record the interview. The participant had the right to decline the recording.

Justice

According to Orb et al. (2000), justice refers to the act of being fair and sharing equally. The objective is not to exploit or abuse the participants. I ensured all participants were given the same amount of time to interview and provide clarifications when asked. All participants were asked the same questions and were provided opportunities to add any additional comments.

Researcher Role

For the phenomenological study, my primary role as the researcher as instrument was to transform the data of the lived experiences into words highlighting the essence of the phenomena – The Mentors' perspective. As a former middle and high school principal in two urban school districts in the New York City public school system and as a current adjunct, field supervisor, and teacher mentor for a school of education in a university that serves a diverse community, I have witnessed first-hand the varied experiences of mentors, students, teachers, and administrators prior to as well as during the COVID – 19 pandemic.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I must admit it was challenging for me to reserve my comments during the interviews. Also, as I reviewed the data source documents, I had to reserve my judgement at times. The perspectives of teacher mentors are a critical issue as we witness the attrition of our teaching population: best mentoring practices must be thoroughly researched and shared with the education community in order to curtail the declining numbers of our teaching force. It is the believe of this researcher that teachers, especially first year teachers, must be afforded every resource available to become

successful educators; therefore, we as educators must seize every opportunity to engage

in conversations related to mentoring practices. To address my urges, biases, and ensure

objectivity during the research process, I recorded my personal thoughts, questions, and

ideas in a journal allowing me to revisit later as I contemplate further study and research.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

This phenomenological study identified and examined mentors' perspectives of mentoring practices for new teachers through the lens of the Danielson Framework for Teachers (FFT). In Chapter 1, the introduction, I outline the research problem and the significance of the study and introduce the research questions and purpose of the study. Chapter 2 is a review of existing literature related to the research topic. Chapter 3 is a review of the phenomenological methods guiding the study, the ethical considerations, and the data analysis techniques that answer the research questions. Chapter 4 is an overview of the research findings based on the data collected throughout the study.

I attempted to gain insight into the mentors' lived experiences regarding how they understood, used, and evaluated various strategies utilized in their individual practices. As described in Chapter 3, the qualitative data was gathered through individual mentor interviews, and data sources that included mentors' fieldnotes, journals, anecdotals, mentee reflections, and classroom observation reports. This chapter explores the following themes generated from mentors interviews and content analysis based on the research questions. Following a series of exhaustive coding methods, three themes were evident: *building trust, developing competency in planning and preparation, and establishing professional relationships* (see Table 2).

Table 2

Themes

THEME	Subthemes	Data Sources	Trustworthiness
Building Trust	Mentors willing to: "being sensitive to the mentee's immediate need(s)!" "being available for support" "being honest in the assessment	Interviews Observations Fieldnotes Reflections	Member Checking
Developing Competency in planning and preparation	Mentors offer to: "help to develop competency in content area skills" Model expected outcome Provide examples of student engagement	Interviews Observations Fieldnotes Reflections	Member Checking
Establishing Professional Relationships	Mentors help to develop skills in: Self-reflection, Self-advocacy, Relationship building of collegial, student, parents, and supervisors	Interviews Observations Fieldnotes Reflections	Member Checking

Description of Participants

All are pseudonyms:

Ross

     Ross is a former retired high school principal with 48 years of experience in the

NYCDOE. He taught ELA, Humanities, and Social Studies grades 9-12 prior to

becoming a high school assistant principal. He has been mentoring new teachers for six years. As an adjunct he also teaches a seminar for student teachers on the college campus.

Christy

Christy is a former assistant principal with the NYCDOE with 32 years of experience teaching math in elementary and middle school and 10 years as a mentor for new teachers. She is currently working as an adjunct and mentors new math teachers as well as student teachers. In addition, she currently works with a popular company that develops home and school products for students in grades Pre-K -5 that include grade-based lesson plans, curriculum, and activities for students grades pre-k through 6.

Linda

Linda has 25 years of teaching experience in public and Catholic schools. She is also a former assistant principal and a private educational consultant with 8 years of mentoring experience. She also works primarily with new math and science teachers. As a consultant she mentors new principals as well. She is CEO of her own consultancy and has developed her own resources and has modified the Danielson Framework (FFT) to fit the needs of her mentees and clients.

Michael

Michael has more than 50 years as an educator and is a retired school principal. With 40 years of mentoring experience, early in Michael's career he became a most sought-after master teacher. He mentors new teachers in all subject areas with a specialty in mathematics grades 6-12. He focuses much on classroom management, lesson plan development and delivery, and professional growth. In addition, he has always supported new mentors and offers to collaborate with them and share his experiences and expertise.

Michael also maintains a positive and professional relationship with his former mentees. Many of these mentees, now teachers and/or supervisors, have been guest speakers for his mentee seminars.

Harriet

Harriet is a retired elementary school principal with more than 50 years as an educator. She has been mentoring new teachers for 44 years in her capacity as an assistant principal, principal, and now college adjunct. She mentors all subjects. She has buddied with new mentors and collaborated with previous directors of the new teachers' programs at the university level. Helen graciously is welcoming of all new mentors and shares her experiences and expertise. She stays connected with her former mentees and offers support when and where it may be needed.

Jack

Jack is a retired high school principal with more than 50 years of experience in education and some 20 years of experience in mentoring new teachers and student teachers. He also teaches courses in math at the college level. He believes that mentors should work with mentees in their common content area in order to be more successful. On occasion, he has had to take on new teachers in other content areas thus he networks with peer mentors to make certain that he provides his mentees with the best strategies for improvement.

Diane

Diane is a retired assistant principal in elementary/middle school from the NYCDOE with 40 years of experience in education and 33 years of experience of mentoring experience. She mentors new teachers and student teachers in all subjects.

Diane is a member of several local and national educational and service organizations that support her work as a mentor. She believes in current research and always provides her mentees with the latest research.

Mary

Mary is a retired high school assistant principal with 32 years of experience in education and 10 years of mentoring experience. In addition, Mary is a private educational consultant who mentors new principals as well. She has assisted founding and new school principals in staffing decisions and has provided professional development on various school related topics to ensure success. Her specialization in Special Education has provided much support for new teachers, new principals, and supervisors, as well as veteran teachers in need of revitalization.

Rene

Rene is a retired middle/high school principal with 39 years of experience in education and 20 years of experience of mentoring experience. Prior to becoming an assistant principal, she was chosen by her principal to lead the special education department while they looked to replace the assistant principal. Though Rene did not have the credentials at the time to apply for the position, after seeing the impact that she made as the coordinator, she with the guidance of her principal enthusiastically pursued her master's degree in school administration and supervision. She uses her membership in various national and international educational organizations to hone her practice and find new and creative ways to support her mentees.

As discussed in Chapter 3, this phenomenological study included interviews with nine participants. All of the mentors in this study work in urban, low-socio-economic

schools throughout New York City with diverse cultural populations. These mentors have a range of 25 to 52 years of experience in education, 10 – 44 years of mentoring experience, and have been designated as a mentor by a teaching university and/or district. Each mentor has a caseload of five to eight new teacher mentees that include both the first and second year. They support new teachers in all five boroughs of New York City public schools. Of the nine participants: five are males and four are females; six are White, two are Black, and one is Latino; all are currently college adjuncts working with both new teachers and student teachers; two are private educational consultants; and one has a specialization in Special Education (see Table 1).

Participants offered insights into their approaches to mentoring as related to the topic. Mary stated that she created her own formal mentoring process, which she believed had proven to be quite effective. I then asked that she explain the process in detail and include evidence of its effectiveness. Mary shared during the taped interview, the procedure she developed when meeting with her mentees. She explained that her process was to meet with her mentees as soon after the observation as possible for an immediate debriefing and complete the Mentor/Mentee Conference Log/Intervention Plan (see APPENDIX G) with them. She would then ask them to make a copy so they could have feedback on the mentoring session to take away.   She added that her mentees liked the immediate feedback and also were able to take part in the professional discussion with her.   Mary then asked if they had a buddy teacher and explained the importance of having a veteran colleague on site that could provide additional support. Afterwards, Mary informed the mentees that they would receive a more detailed observation report in

a day or two that would include how their lesson was aligned to the FFT, content area state standards, and recommendations for next steps.

Mary also proceeded to share her use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT) as a tool and how she modified it for her mentees. She added, "Danielson is great because it breaks down into components and helps teach individual skills but, it leaves out some competencies that many of my mentees need". When asked to give examples of what she felt is missing, she added, "Real strategies for classroom management, improving the classroom environment, and how to foster co-teacher relationships are strategies I feel are missing from Danielson".

Data Analysis Approach

At the conclusion of the interviews, I analyzed the data by identifying significant statements or quotes, also known as horizontalization, to determine thematic connections (Moustakas, 1994). Once this was completed, textural and structural descriptions were outlined. Textural description is a description of the participants' experiences, whereas in a structural description the "how" is the focus by identifying the conditions, situations, or context of the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Analysis

Following the secured CISCO Systems Webex interviews, the audio recordings and transcriptions were reviewed and cleaned for clarity, removing any inconsequential phases such as "you know" or repeated words that did not affect the meaning or tone of the responses. Interviewing "is an art, a reflection of the personality of the interviewer, and cannot be taught" (Seidman, 2013). I applied the following listening skills as identified by Seidman (2013):

- Listen to what the participant is saying. Concentrate on the substance of the response.

- Listen to your "inner voice." Take the participants' language seriously without making them feel defensive about it. Avoid using words like challenge, adventure, fascinate.

- Listen while remaining aware of the process as well as the substance. Be aware of the time, how much you have covered, and how much is left to be covered.

In addition to applying the above listening skills, Seidman (2013) encourages the researcher to ask questions when you do not understand, ask to hear more about a subject, explore, don't probe, avoid leading questions, ask open-ended questions, and don't interrupt

All participants agreed that the Danielson Framework for teaching was supportive of new teachers development and professional growth with individual modifications. Mary suggested, "As a former Special Education teacher and supervisor, I developed a needs assessment template for each of my mentees much like a modified Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). This plan initially assesses my mentees strengths and needs and helps me to outline a plan of intervention" (see Appendix E). Each participant seemed positive about their current mentoring practices but agreed that this took years of trial and error to hone. Additionally, they agreed that additional professional development was needed to support the work of mentors and they were pleased that this study was being conducted.

All participants believed that the most important factors in mentoring was to build trust between the mentor and mentee as well as between the mentor and administration.

Michael and Harriet have been mentoring more than 40 years as master teachers, school administrators, and adjuncts and often work as a team with their new teachers, both agree that trust and competency development is important for new teacher development and success. Michael stated, "building a trusting relationship with my mentees by being available to them 7 days a week (through email, phone, text and possibly face-to-face) could make the difference between teacher success and retention". Harriet added that, "Most mentees need a hand to hold, confidence building, and real hands-on support that have been researched, tried, and proven successful". Both Michael and Harriet use Danielson but saw this framework as more of a check list used by school supervisors. Michael passionately added, "Danielson should be reviewed thoroughly with new teachers and completed after having a conversation with the teacher to compare and discuss what the teacher wanted to accomplish and what the supervisor/mentor actually observed". Rene added, "the FFT has a common language that school administrators use with their staff, so we as mentors must also use this language". "When I write my observation reports, Rene added, "I take out my FFT rubric and cite the areas of improvement that are most critical and can be easily implemented. I also offer suggested ways that my mentee can implement them".

Jack, a retired principal of grades 7-12, with 40 years of experience in education and some 20 years of experience mentoring believes that mentors need more unified professional development in their mentoring practices. He stated, "I rarely receive professional development with my peers and am left to seek new strategies and supports on my own". Jack is a long-standing member of various professional educational organizations and has developed a network with his peers in other schools of education to

access collegial support. All mentors agreed that they would like more structured meetings to talk to and share with their peers. Several also added that they would be willing to lead professional development sessions as well.

In addition to mentoring new teachers, both Linda and Mary are also private educational consultants who mentor new principals for charter, private, and religious schools as well. Both have found working with principals is critical in mentoring new teachers. Mary says, "I get a better understanding of what the administration really needs, and I can also be on the same page as I support both supervisors and their new teachers". Linda agreed that she has seen the same issues faced by new teachers in all types of schools. "When everyone is on the same page, meaning mentees and supervisors, the work is doable and purposeful. Also, trust can be established", Linda adds. All mentors agreed that the most important recommendations needed for improving the implementation and success of formal mentoring programs were:

1. Providing meaningful and consistent professional development for mentors that includes sharing of best practices.

2. Purposeful pairing of mentor and mentee: i.e., same content areas

3. Periodic meetings of mentors and school administrators to make expectations clear and to create an honest and open partnership.

Diane, a former middle school assistant principal, stated, "I find that pre and post observation debriefing is beneficial for the new teacher. I dedicate a whole day to each new teacher so that I can actually see and understand what they experience." She added that she learned this technique from an assigned mentor early in her mentoring career. "I can observe how my mentees begin and end their day and also observe various challenges

that they may encounter". "It's also helpful for them to air their concerns to me immediately and ask for support in addressing them," Diane added. Diane also agreed that more opportunities should be made by the university for mentor sharing in possibly a forum setting.

Christy is the youngest participant and has just recently acquired her doctorate degree in education with a focus on math literacy. She added, "it's also important that mentors have a firm knowledge of the content area of their mentees in order to be more helpful, therefore pairing mentor and mentees is critical in my view".

As Ross stated, "More time should be allocated to mentoring. I like my colleagues are only required to see our mentees once a month but, like many mentors I know we visit more often and as needed". As mentioned previously in Chapter 3, allocating more time was most desired by new teachers (Rockoff, 2008). All nine mentors participants interviewed believed that the consistency and increased frequency of mentoring time had made a significant difference in their new teachers' professional growth. As a consultant as well as mentor, Mary stated, "Yes, I agree that consistency and increased frequency is important but more important is the quality of the mentoring. We as mentors must be mindful of the specific needs of our mentees and focus on providing that support based on research". Each participant was able to address the elements essential to quality mentoring, ideas, that when coded, recoded, and bracketed yield a series of themes.

Theme 1: Building Trust

The first theme, building trust, is defined by the various ways that mentors help mentees build trust in their school communities. The participants in this study identified actions that would assist them in developing an environment that offers support and

sustainability. Mentors begin this effort by building trust between themselves and the

mentees. Overall, participants shared that being able to build trust is one of the main

qualities of a good mentor. Participants identify trust as important, described creating a

sense of safety and comfort. Overall, building these relationships required vulnerability,

sharing, and generosity as described by Mary, who states, "I begin to establish trust

during our first encounter by introducing myself and gifting my mentee with a small tin

of cookies as they share how they are feeling. In that initial meeting, we talked about the

purpose of mentoring, and I shared my own experiences as a mentee. That often times

puts them at ease."   Ease and psychological safety were salient throughout the

participants answers.

Similarly, Jack describes his approach to beginning the mentoring relationship by

sharing his personal experiences, creating a sense of commonality. "I usually begin with

my own background and share how I began my career." Linda offers mentees some

choice, an important consideration given perceived power differentials. She describes

her approach: "often we begin with an email introduction. I ask for their school schedule

and then ask what days and times might be the best to visit. Upon the reply, I then set up

my visit and asked them to inform their supervisor that I would be coming to visit.

During that meeting, I will ask them what they believe is working and where they believe

they need support". It is said that trust is a key component of a good teacher – student

relationship and of a good learning environment. Specifically, these include sensitivity to

immediate needs, being available for support, and being honest in assessment.

Subtheme A: Being Sensitive to the Mentees' Immediate Need(s)

One of the important findings of this study is that the manner in which needs are addressed is sometimes as important as the needs themselves. Participants in this study agree that mentees need support. The interviews indicate that few mentees say that all is well. Most often they have issues that they aren't certain how to deal with. Participants indicate that mentors have the responsibility to observe objectively and offer practical strategies for improving outcomes. The interviews suggest that addressing teacher concerns promptly demonstrates that their opinions and well-being are valued, which may boost their morale and job satisfaction. This in turn increases trust and communication. Participants in the study described their flexibility to answer questions at the mentee's convenience. Meeting the immediate needs of the mentees requires availability, an additional subtheme found in the data.

Subtheme B: Being Available for Support

Mentors Michael, Harriet, Diane, and Mary schedule the several hours of the mentees day or the full day to actually see first-hand and to offer realistic support. Each mentors says that mentees either call or email them after the school day or on the weekends to get advice. Linda added, "though we are only required to visit once a month, many times we agree to make additional visits to address issues that come up". Jack shared, "Donald, my mentee, was having issues with his co-teacher in an inclusion class. The co-teacher never shared his lesson plan and never allowed Donald to lead any part of the lesson. After, observing this class, I realized that the co-teacher had little or no training in co-teaching." Jack met with Donald during his preparation period and suggested that Donald speak to his supervisor and ask that he, his co-teacher, and the

supervisor meet to make recommendations for changes that would support student learning as well as Donald's professional growth. Jack added, "I also asked Donald if he would like me to be present during this meeting". Mentors in this study took on the role of supporter and advocate, leveraging the trust built in the relationship and ensuring that mentees feel support. Trust is not only necessary in meeting mentee needs, in this study, it became apparent that a cornerstone of trust is rooted in honest feedback and assessment.

Subtheme C: Being Honest in Assessment

Mentors have the professional responsibility to be honest with the mentee. Participants in this study, understanding this have learned that mentees desire feedback, but may be frustrated with unclear directives. Mary says, "I've learned that you can say anything, but it is important how you say it and the tone that you use". Most mentees are fragile and are being given directives from every direction and vantage point; principals say one thing, the supervisors say something else, and of course veteran colleagues (who, participants assert are well protected by both seniority and their union) have their own points of view. "Mentors must critically observe and listen to their mentees and offer constructive, practical, and timely feedback," Diane agrees.   The participants in this study agree that trusting, timely, honest relationships create a foundation for productive learning and growth. Mentors in this study provide feedback on the mentee's performance and help them to identify areas for improvement and build on their strengths. In addition, participants in this study believe that the support they provide can help mentees to apply their learning in real-world situations. This is especially important for teachers with truncated induction programs.

Theme 2: Developing Competency in Planning and Preparation

This theme is characterized by the role mentoring plays in introducing and reinforcing fundamental concepts that depend on practice. Participants in this study indicate that mentoring programs can provide students with the guidance, support, and encouragement they need to achieve their goals, by reinforcing concepts learned in induction programs in the real-world environment. For example, Rene asserts, "Most of my mentees may not meet consistently with their on-site mentor or spend any real quality time with them. Some don't receive formal or informal observations for months after the start of the school year from a supervisor".

Many participants in this study also agreed that with this inconsistency of targeted constructive feedback by some on-site mentors, new teachers' competency may be in question. "I am only required to meet my mentees once a month and several have asked if I could come more often", says Michael. The new teachers that these mentors have been assigned have received teacher education in a city and university induction program. Most have never had the experience as a student teacher and may have been part of a teacher residency program for six to nine months prior to manning their own class. During their induction process these new teachers have had to learn to plan and implement instruction, view, and evaluate model teaching scenarios, and evaluate their peers performance. In the final months of the induction process they may be placed in a teaching opportunity with a co-teacher who is a veteran. Participants in this study identify their role in supporting mentees in content skills development, and best practice in terms of expected outcomes and student engagement.

Subtheme A: Helping to Develop Competency in Content Skills

Ideal mentoring often pairs mentors and mentees with common content area expertise. Sometimes this is not possible, therefore it is the responsibility of the school administrator to offer appropriate content area support and the mentor support other competencies such as classroom management and strategies for improved student engagement and learning. Mentors recommend to mentees that they network with their peers in other schools as well as participate in content area professional development opportunities within their own schools. In addition, co-planning has been recommended as a great strategy to sharpen the mentees content area skills. Mary, "in my private consultancies as well as mentoring at the university I have found that all new teachers develop better when they participate in co-planning lessons with co-teachers as well as same grade peers. They can learn from each other and share resources". "I find that new teachers working together in co-planning or team planning gives them more confidence in their planning and builds competency skills in their content areas," added Christy.

Subtheme B: Modeling Expected Outcomes

If it has not been recommended by the school supervisor, most mentors suggest that the mentee ask to observe a colleague during delivery of instruction. Jack, "I usually suggest to my mentees that they ask permission to observe another teacher in their content area and preferably on the same grade." Linda, I have actually spoken to supervisors and asked if my mentee might be able to conduct intervisitations with other good teachers". Several mentors, with the mentees approval, have offered to model a segment of the lesson as a guest presenter. Michael, "I've modeled group work sessions to promote math literacy for some mentees both their classes and in the course seminars".

"I have modeled student self- assessments in my mentees classes," says, Linda. Afterwards, during a preparation period or working lunch the mentee and mentor review what took place during the modeled session and discuss how they might use this skill in other ways. On occasion, mentors have suggested that the mentee ask the supervisor to model a skill or lesson segment for a more concrete approach.

Subtheme C: Provide Examples and Evidence of Student Engagement

Participants in this study addressed the question of how we know the students are engaged and learning was described in the observation reports. The mentors' observation reports often highlight examples and evidence of student engagement and learning in written feedback (see Appendix H). This report outlined several domains of the FFT and gave necessary critical and constructive feedback to the mentee. Similarly, interview feedback reinforced these ideas, such as, "I use the same FFT Rubric adapted version used by school supervisors to make recommendations in my final observation report. Therefore, it is consistent with what the mentees are already familiar with", states Ross. The mentor also elicited evidence of student engagement and learning through a post observation conversation. Diane, asks the question directly as a part of her process, explaining, "During my post-observation conversation questions I ask are what did your students learn? how do you know they learned it? were all of your students engaged in the lesson? Usually, the students show evidence of their learning and understanding in the written exit ticket or through the verbal responses elicited during the lesson summary." Ross added, "Regarding evidence of student engagement, I ask, what is your evidence? I also suggest that they make a mark on their seating charts to indicate which students responded during the lesson and how often".

As important as building trust, maintain trust is also important, and sustained through honest conversations. Participants in this study indicate that mentors and mentees should engage in regular, flexible communication, to discuss progress, challenges, and next steps. For example, ," During our coursework we share examples of what type of feedback mentees receive and what they find is helpful", Diane. "Also, I encourage sharing challenges they may face or strategies that they have implemented that worked," states Harriet. Feedback is an essential component of developing competency. The mentors in this study value performance feedback and appear willing to provide constructive feedback that is specific, actionable, and focused on improvement. Rene states, "I always offer immediate feedback on positive performance, such as having a written agenda posted or having established classroom routines and complementing students for following them". In this example, mentees are seen as colleagues, and an expectation of professionalism, as defined in the FFT nurtures trust and cultivates an environment of continuous improvement.

Theme 3: Demonstrating Professionalism

Domain 4 of the FFT defines and outlines how a mentee can grow in the profession and demonstrate professionalism. Mentees are encouraged to reflect on each encounter with students, colleagues, supervisors, parents, mentors, etc. areas in need of improvement. Professionalism requires a commitment to critical self-reflection, self-advocacy, and the development of professional relationships, as described by the participants.

Subtheme A: Self Reflection

Mentors suggest that mentees keep some type of log or make notes on their lesson plans to reflect on what they have done and how they perceive that it was received by the students during and after lesson delivery. Harriet discusses this specifically, stating, "I always recommend keeping a daily log. Mentees can record anecdotals and comments for later review and reflection. Some mentees will contact me by email or text to ask my opinion on a decision made or an outcome perceived during lesson delivery." Also, checking in with an on-site mentor, supervisor, or season colleagues for support can be helpful. This was evident in Mary's conference log (APPENDIX G) where mentees might make a note on a lesson plan or in their log specifically stating what they believed was working. Mentors help a new teacher reflect on the extent to which the learning goals were met and offer strategies to help teachers understand how to identify specific ways in which a lesson might be improved in the future (FFT Domain 4a).

In one example offered by Michael, a mentee made notes on the lesson plan to identify individual students in her period 4 class who were having difficulty understanding a math concept. "recording their names next to the instructional practice reminded her to review it later to make modifications for future instruction. Also, she used these notes to discuss her assessment of the lesson outcomes with her school assigned veteran teacher or on-site mentor to look for specific alternative courses of action", Michael added. Reflection is shown in this example to build competence but may also serve as a vehicle to empower mentees to advocate for themselves.

Subtheme B: Self Advocacy

As many in a new position have to learn "the ropes" or how the system works before voicing concerns or opinion, it is critical that a new teacher observe and follow appropriate protocols when they believe themselves to need to advocate for self. Mentors often suggest that new teachers journal their concerns and speak with a non-judgmental party first. As cited in the theme: building trust, Jack observed Donald's issue with his co-teacher and encouraged Donald to explain how it made him feel. Then, Jack elicited possible suggested strategies from Donald and offered a few recommendations that would help Donald advocate for himself. Eventually, Donald, his co-teacher, on-site mentor, and his immediate supervisor met to discuss the importance of co-planning, sharing tasks, outlining a plan to include him in developing daily lessons as well as being cognizant that co-teachers are equal and integral partners in the classroom. In addition, the supervisor used this example to emphasis co-teaching strategies during professional development sessions. Advocacy is shown in this example to build competence as well as confidence in building professional relationships that will support the professional development and growth of a new teacher.

Subtheme C: Establishing Professional Relationships

Students of education hear consistently, "it's all about relationships". Cultivating appropriate professional relationships in the school community is critical. (FFT 4d). New teachers, like so many new employees, may not always know boundaries. Usually in the new teachers' handbook these protocols are outlined and sometimes a supervisor doesn't take the time to review each and makes assumptions that the new teacher should know better. Diane cautioned one mentee that she should not be Facebook friends with

any student or parent. "You must always remain professional in your school", she recommended.

Establishing appropriate relationships with one's supervisors, colleagues, students, and parents is critical to survival in the school community. Mentors also offer examples of what these relationships should look like as well.

Themes Summary

The first theme that emerged and was found to be consistent throughout all interviews was the topic of building trust. Mary shared, "Trust is key in a mentor/mentee relationship. One mentee was concerned that I might share our conversations with his school supervisor. I wasn't surprised because I had heard this often in my work". "I informed him that our conversations would be confidential and only he and the university would receive written observation reports. I also informed him that if I believed that he needed further support, I would offer to request recommendations from the university director." Harriet had also shared, "many mentees are fearful of their jobs because they've constantly heard that an underperforming new teacher is easiest to dismiss, remove, or fire because they have no real support from either the DOE or the teachers' union. That is why I do my best to offer examples and to work in concert with administration".

Each of the mentor participants admitted that they also tried to build a collaboration based on trust with administration by sharing university policies, the practical use of the Danielson rubric, and any other tools that might ensure mentee success. Participants in this study overwhelmingly describe the mentor role as critical in supporting new teachers by building trust, developing competency in planning and

preparation, and cultivating professionalism. By establishing a foundation of trust, the mentors in this study describe the creation of a safe and supportive learning environment that encourages new teachers to take risks and grow. The participants also note that mentors help new teachers to develop competency in planning and preparation, specifically in providing feedback and guidance on instructional strategies and classroom management techniques. Finally, the mentors in this study collectively assert that they cultivate professionalism by sharing their own experiences, providing opportunities for professional growth, offering context specific, goal oriented timely support and guidance.

Connection to the Research Questions

This study was constructed to answer three research questions:

RQ1: What are mentors' perceptions of their current mentoring practices?

The participants in this study self-identify and are designated by an accredited school of education as mentors. Each has the knowledge, skills, and disposition to educate and support new teachers in their professional development and growth in pedagogy based on their prior experience.

Mentoring is a best practice strategy in supporting new teachers in their first years of teaching and provides new teachers the proper support to transition from student teacher to novice teacher. Mentors use their knowledge, skills, and expertise to focus on assisting new teachers develop positive relationships between teacher-student; teacher-administrator; teacher – parent, and teacher-colleague. Mentors shared proven and researched practices that:

a) Help new teachers decide what to teach and how to teach it, advising them about how to choose, adapt, or create appropriate materials and instructional practices.

b) Help new teachers learn successful classroom management skills and access strategies for successes with diverse academic and behavioral student populations.

c) Offer written observation reports of lesson delivery with constructive feedback.

d) Provide "experience and expertise that focuses on the central components of teaching: classroom instruction, curriculum and lesson planning, and classroom management" (Darling-Hammond.1999; Everton &Smithey 2000; Feiman-Nemser 1983: Holloway 2001; Humphrey et al. 2000; Wilson et al 2001).

The mentors in this study valued the mentor-mentee relationship and took the time to develop a trusting relationship with their mentees by learning about and being sensitive to the mentees' background, culture, community, and family. They use and describe artifacts, resources, and other practices to provide multiple perspectives ensuring that each mentee feels supported and can learn and implement strategies needed to become a better teacher. These mentors place their mentees at the center of their learning process, helping them to utilize their strengths and to understand the competencies that they would need to develop to become successful, As a result, their mentees can gain a sense of confidence, be ready to take risks, and make every effort to grow professionally.

RQ2: Which mentoring strategies do mentors perceive best support new teachers' (mentees) development and professional growth?

These mentors studied were open-minded, understood the importance of mentoring from multiple perspectives, and developed empathy for their mentees' first experiences in teaching. However, the mentors were aware of the various mandates by state, district, and school that must be adhered to in their effort to provide nonbiased

support. Though the mentors were aware of their implicit biases and vulnerabilities, their prior experiences as teachers, supervisors, and school administrators assisted them in their unbiased practices. They acknowledged feeling at times uncomfortable in facilitating conversations to assist the mentees in developing self-advocacy skills in difficult situations, but they persisted to offer their mentees the best practices from research as well as the mentors' own past experiences. They assessed the need for support and professional development from peers and university faculty to ensure the well-being of their mentees.

These mentors offered numerous strategies that they perceived to be considered best practices that had been researched and proven effective in their own practices. All believed that the pre-observations and post-observation debriefing sessions conducted immediately afterwards helped mentees become more confident in their daily lesson preparation and delivery. Additionally, all agreed that written observation reports referencing the FFT competencies along with clearly defined recommendations were an asset as well. In addition, they shared exemplars of classroom artifacts with their mentees as additional support.

Mentors offered various resources and strategies to their mentees that could be implemented immediately for better outcomes. Some mentors provided mentees with samples of classroom artifacts such as daily agendas to post as student guides, bulletin board exemplars to highlight student work, and classroom protocols for better classroom management were just a few of numerous recommendations. Each mentor used the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT) to provide mentees with concrete examples

and exemplars for better teaching strategies and used the framework to critically address their own practice.

RQ3: What recommendations do mentors suggest for improving the implementation and success of formal mentoring programs?

The mentors studied had access to resources and artifacts from multiple perspectives that represented state mandated mentoring practices as well as graduate schools of education teaching programs. Mentors periodically meet as a group for professional development to share new strategies as well as updated mandates. All mentors studied felt that more mentor centered sessions were needed. It was also agreed that some of these sessions should include more mentoring sharing, discussion topics chosen by mentors, and opportunities to seek support of their peers in handling challenging issues with mentees and school administration.

Conclusion

Phenomenological research allows the researcher as instrument to gain insight into a particular phenomenon through the lived experiences of individuals. By listening to and observing the participants, I was able to collect and interpret data thus creating meaning of the best and most successful mentoring practices approached from the perspective of actively working mentors.

These findings indicate and confirm that the FFT is a useful framework that identifies those aspects of a teacher's responsibilities that have been documented through empirical studies and theoretical research as promoting improved student learning and teacher development. The 22 components outlined in the FFT help to define what

teachers should know and to be able to do in the exercise of their profession. Moreover, the mentors identify building trust, developing competency, and establishing professionalism as integral to the development of high-quality mentoring relationships. This study aims to add to the existing research and to fill the gap of the mentors' perspectives on these mentoring practices.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

The present study was a phenomenological qualitative study involving university

mentors of new teachers. Exploring their perspectives and perceptions of what strategies

they each believed were best to support the growth and development of their mentees and

to produce successful outcomes in their mentees teaching experience is the researcher's

goal.

The overall purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain a better

understanding of the lived experience and perspectives of mentoring practices by mentors

of new teachers. This study addresses mentors' willingness, ability, and desire to utilize

their skills, knowledge, and to develop the mindset needed to become more effective

teacher mentors. The three research questions regarding mentors preparation, knowledge,

skills, and expertise to support mentees of a graduate teaching program were posed to

explore an under researched topic on mentoring perspectives by mentors (Daly, 2017).

In Chapter 1, I discussed the purpose of the study, to explore teacher mentors'

perspectives of best practices: that is those practices that mentors can provide evidence of

successful outcomes for novice teachers in a graduate mentor support program. This

evidence includes mentors' observation reports, fieldnotes, mentee reflections, and

classroom artifacts. Additionally, this study aimed to explore the perceptions of mentors

assigned to new teachers as these perceptions pertain to changes in the current mentoring

programs, the possible limitations of the mentoring programs, and potential

recommendations to improve outcomes.

Chapter 2 provided a discussion of the theoretical framework and reviewed

relevant literature about mentoring practices. Procedures and methodology for the study

were explained in Chapter 3. My findings were explicitly written into narrative form in Chapter 4 and finally in Chapter 5 a summative explanation of the connections between the present study, the research questions, related literature, critical reflection of the study, and implications from the findings, particularly as they relate to research and practice is presented.

Implications of Findings

The results of the present study have implications not only for the wider understanding of mentors of new teachers, but also for the theoretical and conceptual frameworks described in Chapter 1. The study was built upon the framework of The Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT, 2018) and is evident from the interviews and documents gleaned from the participants that they all used the FFT with their mentees.

Though the FFT is mandated by the university program, the participants believed that it does provide a constructive outline and plan for teacher support. Several mentors, like Michael, Harriet, Ross, and Mary believed that it should be modified and tailored to the specific and targeted needs of the mentee and use their own modified versions in their assessments. As stated in Chapter 1, the FFT is the most widely used teacher evaluation framework in the U.S. (Milanowski, 2011). The Framework for Teaching (FFT) has been used widely in multiple settings including teacher preparation, supervision of student teachers, and teacher assessment (Danielson, 2008; Morris-Mathews et al., 2021; Sandilos et al., 2019) and it is still the most consistently used conceptual framework both nationally and internationally to provide educators examples of successful teaching strategies and best practices. This study suggests that the FFT is

integral to the profession as the stakes in teacher evaluation become higher, the accuracy of this framework is essential to teacher development.

Overall, the result of this research implies that mentors are a critical voice in the successful implementation of mentoring practices. These participating mentors saw themselves as experienced pedagogues and yet life-long learners still in need of support and professional development. They acknowledged their own vulnerabilities and concerns when they may have been unable to successfully reach a mentee. Overwhelmingly, these mentors were successful in supporting their mentees and continued to sustain positive relationships with them well after the mentoring assignment had ended. In addition, they reflected through their personal journals on their own beliefs and implicit biases. However, they did not abandon their mentees or their mission to provide their mentees the best support.

Each mentor persisted in offering their mentees their best known and researched strategies and even went far beyond their own comfort zones. They collaborated with the university, their peers, and school-based administrators to ensure that proper mandates were being followed as well as the much-needed support was being offered. They developed trusting relationships with their mentees in order to promote success. They proceeded to establish respectful, reflective, and thoughtful practices that would promote the most positive learning environments for both the new teacher as well as the diverse student population. Overall, they demonstrated a willingness, ability, and desire to provide their mentees with relevant and realistic learning experiences for their professional growth and development.

Implications to the Theoretical Framework

The present study is connected well with the theoretical framework utilized in its conception and the existing literature on the different explored elements. The findings support the claims made by prior researchers on the importance of mentoring for new teachers. Well-mentored beginning teachers are twice as likely to stay in teaching as those who do not receive mentoring (Espinoza et al., 2018). The three most significant strategies for successful mentoring gleaned from this phenomenological study are building trust, developing competency, and establishing professionalism. As stated previously in Chapter 2 the FFT provides an outline with examples for mentors, mentees, school supervisors, and university schools of education induction and preparation to follow. The quantitative study conducted by Wiens, et al., (2019) also supports that a framework such as the FFT could help to reduce teacher attrition and improve student learning during new teachers first three years of practice.

Relationship to the Present Study and to Prior Research

This study was constructed using the existing research about mentoring practices for new teachers. The existing literature and findings of this study support the significant influence of mentors' practices with an emphasis on new teachers. However, the findings also revealed that mentors need more support from graduate teaching institutions and district programs developed to attract new teachers to the field. Additional time spent with mentees and more resources offering purposeful professional development are factors that are critically needed to support mentors. Mentors interviewed agreed that continued professional development, content area support, and professional learning communities where mentors are supported to provide what new teachers really need for 21st century learning could help new teacher retention. It has been shown that strong

mentoring and induction programs for novice teachers can be a valuable strategy to retain new teachers and improve their effectiveness. Well-monitored beginning teachers are twice as likely to stay in teaching as those who do not receive mentoring (Espinoza et al., 2018).

The existing evidence-based research demonstrated positive influences on both mentor and mentee when mentors receive appropriate training and support. Consistent and sustainable professional development towards educating and supporting mentors is an emerging topic in education and was last updated February 1, 2023 on the New York State Education Department website:

(https://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/exp/mentoring-requirement.html) .

The study was developed based on existing research of mentoring practices for new teachers as an underdeveloped topic and intended to explore mentors' perspectives, their knowledge of "best practices", and possible recommendations for improving mentoring practices in graduate teaching programs. Through the purposive sampling procedure mentors in an accredited private graduate school of education were contacted, and a total of nine participants agreed to participate in this study. The study included taped interviews and teacher artifacts, documents, and resources. Some limitations related to the study were apparent within the study.

The mentors revealed an internal struggle between their own implicit biases of best practices for new teachers. These feelings made it challenging at times to develop productive relationships with some of the school officials and staff where the mentees were assigned.

The study was initially planned during the COVID-19 pandemic which allowed for some threats to its internal and external validity. The actual study was conducted during the endemic which did not change much of the original process i.e., interviews could not be conducted face-to-face nor could I as the researcher gain physical access to school sites due to district safety protocols. Though many safeguards for students and school personnel are still in place, the pandemic significantly impacted the entire New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE).

The implications of this study align with prior research on mentorship. The study finds value in the role of experienced veteran teachers as mentors. The confidence and critical reflection offered by these mentors aligns with the research of Knight-Mckenna et al, (2017) who found value in mentoring from veteran teachers. Similarly, participants in this study note the importance of individualized, culturally relevant mentoring supports, a contention described in Athanases & Achinstein (2003). In perhaps the most directly aligned findings, participants and the content analysis in this study overwhelmingly prioritize the role of professionalism in effective mentoring relationships, as noted in Grossman et. al., (2012) study finding professionalism necessary to improving morale, retention, and effectiveness. Interestingly, participants in this study, while they did describe competing priorities, did not elaborate on environmental relationships, as identified in organizational study of Hong and Matsko (2019).

This study identifies elements present in the FFT that have been refined and enhanced as a result of experience, value, and motivation of mentors to give back to the profession. This was especially apparent in comments around goal-based learning that reinforces academic content. This information can be used to inform future research

mentoring relationships for pre and in service teachers, and to guide educational practice. For instance, educators may use the findings from this study to inform decisions about how and when to use mentoring strategies, and how to cultivate mentoring relationships that empower mentee teachers.

Implications for Research

The present study adds to the existing body of literature in that it identifies key factors such as building trust, developing competency in planning and preparation, establishing professional relationships as key components of best mentoring practices for the success of new teacher growth and development.

The study supports specific, personalized feedback on instructional practices. Through authentic trusting relationships, feedback can help teachers to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement, which can help them to refine their teaching strategies and improve student learning outcomes as noted in prior studies, and in the FFT. Future studies that provide nuance to the FFT can benefit from the findings of this study. This study also offers support to the role of critical reflection and self-advocacy in success especially for those teachers with limited time in the classroom environment as student teachers. Veteran mentors offer nuance that helps teachers reflect on their instructional practices and make adjustments based on feedback, and this study supports prior research on the value of guidance from experienced educators. These conversations can help teachers to acclimate in a safe environment, stay current with best practices in teaching, and to continuously improve their instructional effectiveness.

Recommendations for Future Research

The present phenomenological study can be built upon in several ways by future research. As aforementioned, the pandemic provides an altogether new area of research on schools and communities. A longitudinal phenomenological study could be conducted with mentors from other universities to determine their unique perspectives. Such a study could include individual interviews that elicit information about significant aspects of professional development and training that universities provide for mentors under typical circumstance and how it changed under pandemic lockdown and after. As schools slowly returned to a "new normal", the study could include observations of how the school community life evolved and how it transformed.

Another area for future research may be to conduct a quantitative analysis of mentors' perceptions of their and others' behaviors and relationships toward their mentees. Utilizing a behavior scale devised by the researchers or already developed by other scholars (Podaskoff et al., 1990), the relationship between individuals' behaviors and the atmosphere of trust within the school community could be analyzed.

An additional area for study might consider conducting a mixed-methods study on the perceptions mentors' perceptions on the aspects of building trust, developing competency, and developing professionalism for new teachers. This study could explore both the qualitive as well as the quantitative aspects.

Lastly, either a case study or grounded theory methodologies could be conducted. Using the case study method, the researchers could explore a case or cases within real-life, contemporary context, or setting as to how building trust affects the group being

studied over a period of time (Yin, 2014). While a grounded theory study could also be conducted to move beyond description and generate or discover a theory for a process of action (Corbin & Strauss, 2007).

Recommendations for Future Practice

The results of the present study led to recommendations for practice by schools of education, district & school administrators, mentors, and new teachers. Schools of education have the task of induction and training of both mentors and new teachers. These higher education institutions could benefit by reviewing the statistics of their existing programs as well as studying the statistics of the programs of competing institutions. It could also prove helpful to work in collaboration with their existing mentors. Might they consider why other programs are being more sought after. Self-evaluation can be a mighty tool for transformative change.

School districts and school administrators could review their individual school report cards to evaluate their current use of funding, mentor training process, and new teacher progress reports to note patterns and trends for consideration in transformative action. Another important area for practice is the reimagining of grant proposals as well as rethinking existing funding sources to fund mentor and mentee experiences for both pre-service and first year in-service mentees.

Current mentors should be seen as critical voices in the conversation for 21st century teacher transformation. New teachers could benefit greatly from hearing and understanding the mentors' perspective of best strategies and practices in order for them to become cognizant of what good teaching should look like. Understanding that the art of teaching is a science to be researched and studied would help new teachers understand

that "Good teachers are not born, they are made" (Candal, 2015). In addition, the current crisis of attrition could be addressed with more meaningful solutions through purposeful study and conversations.

Limitations of Study

Although it was able to fulfill its purpose of exploring the perceptions of mentoring practices by mentors for new teachers, the present study was subject to a few limitations.

One important limitation of this study for future research could be accessibility. I selected a specific school of education program and was given written approval by the director of the program to solicit mentors currently working in the program. In addition, most of the mentors recruited had been and currently are my colleagues in the same program and university. It is important to note that future researchers might not be afforded access to potential participants that this researcher had, thus limiting accessibility for the study.

A second limitation was related to time constraints. This researcher received IRB approval just prior to a major holiday break in both the district and university calendars. Many potential mentor participants were preparing for the break or had completed their assignments and were not available. I reached out to several participants who had verbally agreed in an informal conversation to participate in the study but heard nothing from them. Fortunately, a small sample size of 9 participants agreed and offered to participate upon their return from break. This small sample size could also limit generalizability of the study.

A third limitation of this study could be the personal interest in this topic by the researcher, thus researcher bias. Researcher bias occurs when the person performing the research is passionate about the topic and may have influence on the results (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I have worked as a mentor with the university for more than a decade and have worked closely with several of the participants. Descriptive data could affect my interpretations of the circumstances. My positionality and interest in the topic could cohere with the research inquiries (Milner H.R.,2007).

Throughout this study, I reflected on my own educational career as a teacher, assistant principal, principal and now adjunct working with new teachers and student teachers. With almost 30 years as a teacher and 10 years as a supervisor, I noticed that while the diversity of the student population had risen, the diversity of the mentoring population had not. It is somewhat daunting that so many minority supervisors upon leaving the profession, actually leave and choose not to give back. This I am certain is a topic for another study but, I would like to consider exploring the topic of educators who feel the importance of sharing their expertise and experiences with those new to the career path vs those who choose to leave and not look back.

Lastly, an extremely critical limitation of this study was that my own experience of some personal health issues that could have delayed, halted, or even ended the study had not supportive mentors, colleagues, friends, and family intervened. Research is not for the weak of heart and this researcher has learned and is forever grateful to all who crawled, walked, and ran this journey with me.

Conclusion

The theoretical framework of this study verified the theory of mentoring practices for new teachers. The Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT) has been used for decades by the New York City Department of Education and has been revised several times to meet the changing needs of the population. In 2021, the FFT marked its 25 Anniversary and developed the much needed and timely FFT Indicator Rubric for Remote Teaching and Learning. Most recently in 2022, the FFT released its third edition with updated components, a new rubric, and new tools to support teacher growth and development. This implies the commitment of the FFT to continue to promote and provide a common language for teachers and a vision of instructional excellence. Its resources support teacher professional learning across the career continuum – from the pre-service teacher preparation through teacher leadership and beyond. This researcher finds that the FFT aligns with the premise that the three themes that emerged from interviews and data source documents; *building trust, developing competency, and developing professionalism* are both addressed and clearly outlined in its domains.

Building trust between mentors and mentees is a critical factor if the mentoring process is going to be successful. Mary points out that she begins by bringing a small gift to her mentee at their first meeting. Michael and Harriet share some of their own experiences and encourage mentees to reach out whenever they feel the need. Both Michael and Harriet also remind mentees that they, as mentors, are there to help them [mentees] become great teachers. Each mentor allows mentees to share their concerns and ask questions and ensure them that what they share is confidential. Diane added, "I

also ask my mentees if there might be something that they would like me to share with their supervisors".

Developing competency is paramount in becoming a successful teacher. Mentors in collaboration with assigned schools are responsible for helping mentees understand the importance of continued professional learning in their content area through taking the initiative to join content area professional organizations, staying well-informed of current peer-reviewed literature in their field, and seeking professional collaborations and networking opportunities. Establishing professional relationships with students, parents, colleagues, supervisors, mentors, and other school community stakeholders is also a critical area of competency that mentees must develop in order to experience professional growth in pedagogy.

This study was designed to explore mentors' perspectives on mentoring practices for new teachers needed to guide new teachers in becoming effective pedagogues and remain in the profession. In addition, this study's goal is to offer accredited schools of education, school districts, and school administrators recommendations for more successful implementation of mentoring procedures based on what the mentors have seen and observed.

As already shown by the data, public schools in the United States are experiencing a crisis in retaining novice teachers and veteran teachers are fleeing the field in droves. The impacts on student success and the teaching profession cannot be overstated. In addition to the declining current attrition rates of novices and veterans currently in the field, research shows that there is also a decline in teacher preparation

program enrollments (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2019). Research continues to assert that districts should provide high-quality mentoring and induction to beginning teachers, and in particular, should consider how these supports can meet the needs of a diverse workforce (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019).

Therefore, this phenomenological study hopes to bring this important topic of the lived experiences of mentors as they share their perspectives of best mentoring practices to the forefront so that accredited schools of education new teacher programs and school district administrators might review their existing programs and implement changes to positively affect new teachers' professional growth, assist in teacher retention, and possibly result in more positive student outcomes.

APPENDIX A INVITATION LETTER

Dear Colleagues,

      I am a doctoral student in St. John's University The School of Education, Department of Administrative and Instructional Leadership and I am outreaching to ask for your support, your consideration, and participation in my qualitative, doctoral research study.

      Following up on the suggestion of one of my Doctoral Committee members, I am contacting you to ask if you can kindly participate, through an interview, to be scheduled at your convenience, online or face to face. I can elaborate on the details of your participation as soon as I have a response to this request, and I have gathered a group of participants.

      Of course, my mentor supports this recruitment effort and looks forward to your reply and your participation. If you decide to participate, we can assure you that your identity will remain anonymous and your responses confidential.

      The topic of my proposal is:

MENTORS' PERSPECTIVE ON MENTORING PRACTICES FOR NEW TEACHERS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY, in which I plan to explore the practices currently used in supporting our new teachers.

      Since you have been working with new teachers at various colleges and universities, your perceptions and experience can serve to shed light on mentoring practices for new teachers. It is my hope that this study will offer insight and guidance in our work with new teachers, as well as recommendations that may emerge from the data, for practice and further research.

      If you agree to participate, I will surely share with you the results and summary of the study. I hope you will assist me in this research, and I look forward to a positive response from each of you.   If you agree, can you reply to this email, within the next week, at smithnor@stjohns.edu. As soon as I receive your reply, I will send you more details about the study and the Consent to Participate agreement, to assure you that there are no risks involved in your participation.

    If you have any questions, you can reach me by email at smithnor@stjohns.edu or by telephone.

     In anticipation of your reply and in advance for your assistance, I am most grateful for your consideration. Thank you!

Sincerely yours,

Rosa Smith-Norman
Doctoral Candidate
St. John's University
Department of Administrative and Instructional Leadership (DAIL)
smithnor@stjohns.edu

APPENDIX B IRB APPROVAL LETTER

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

Federal Wide Assurance: FWA00009066

Dec 14, 2022 3:55:25 PM EST

PI: Rosa Smith-Norman
CO-PI: Ceceilia Parnther
The School of Education, Ed Admin & Instruc Leadership

Re: Expedited Review - Initial - **IRB-FY2023-68** *Mentors' Perspective on Mentoring Practices for New Teachers: A Qualitative Study*

Dear Rosa Smith-Norman:

The St John's University Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for *Mentors' Perspective on Mentoring Practices for New Teachers: A Qualitative Study*. The approval is effective from December 14, 2022 through December 13, 2023.

Decision: Approved

PLEASE NOTE: If you have collected any data prior to this approval date, the data must be discarded.

Selected Category: 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Sincerely,

Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD, ABPP
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Professor of Psychology

St. John's University
School of Education
8000 Utopia Parkway
Queens, New York 11439

Consent Form for Teacher Mentors

You have been invited to take part in a research study to learn more about the role of a new teacher mentor. This study is conducted by Rosa Smith-Norman, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Administrative and Instructional Leadership at St. John's University. Her faculty sponsor is Dr. Ceceilia Parnther in the Department of Administrative and Instructional Leadership at St. John's University.

STUDY PROCEDURES
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to take part in a recorded virtual interview relating to your experience as a new teacher mentor. I will ask for your permission to record the interview. You may view the recording and request that all or any portion of the recording be destroyed. Participation in this study will involve approximately 30-45 minutes of your time.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research beyond those of everyday life.

PAYMENT/COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION
Although you will receive no direct benefits, this research may help the researcher understand the role of a new teacher mentor better.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality of your research records is strictly maintained by keeping consent forms separate from data to make sure that the subject's name and identity will not become known or linked with any information they have provided. The researcher is the only person who will have access to the interview recording and transcript. All the information is kept in a password-protected computer file.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. For interviews, you have the right to skip or not answer any questions you prefer not to answer.

RESEARCHER'S AND FACULTY SPONSOR'S INFORMATION

If there is anything about the study or your participation that is unclear or that you do not understand, if you have questions or wish to report a research-related problem, you may contact Rosa Smith-Norman at 646.594.6700 and smithnor@stjohns.edu or the faculty sponsor Dr. Ceceilia Parnther at 718-990-1467 and parnthec@stjohns.edu . .

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT-IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University's Institutional Review Board, St. John's University, Dr. Raymond DiGiuseppe, Chair digiuser@stjohns.edu 718-990-1955 or Marie Nitopi, IRB Coordinator, nitopim@stjohns.edu 718-990-1440.

PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT

___Yes, I give the researcher permission to use my name when quoting material from our interview in her dissertation.

___No, I would prefer that my name not be used.

You have received a copy of this consent document to keep.

<u>Agreement to Participate</u>

_____
Participant's Full Name Printed

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date

APPENDIX D MENTORS' BACKGROUND INQUIRY FORM

Name: _____   **Ethnicity:** _____

Date: _____

Mentors' Questionnaire

1. I have ____years in the field of education.

2. I have been a mentor for _____ years.

3. The subject area(s) of my expertise are _____, _____,

   _____. _____

4. My previous experience was as a ___master teacher ___school administrator

   ___district administrator ____ other (explain)

5. I have received mentor training from _____.

6. I continue with professional development ____ times a year.

7. I offer my mentees constructive written feedback. ____Yes ____No

8. I offer my mentees constructive oral feedback. _____Yes ____No

9. I have modeled teaching strategies for my mentees. _____Yes ____No

10. I critique my mentees lessons by using a prescribed evaluation tool. ____Yes

    ____No

11. The evaluation tool that I use is _____

12. The strategies that I find most successful in my mentoring practice are.

    a. _____

    b. _____

    c. _____

Additional Comments:

<div style="border: 3px double black; padding: 1em;">

NOTE

This inquiry form is used by the researcher to determine your eligibility for participation in this phenomenological qualitative study: Mentors' Perspective On Mentoring Practices For New Teachers. The purpose of this study is to explore your perspective as a secondary school teacher mentor and what you may have determined through your mentoring practices as successful practices and strategies that have gleaned success for the mentees development as an educator.

You will be asked in a subsequent interview questionnaire and follow-up secured taped interview additional questions that pertain to specific practices used in your professional mentoring experience with the mentees.

It is important that you respond to as many items of each questionnaire as you feel most comfortable in responding to. You may choose to respond to several or all questions. This researcher thanks you for taking time to participate in this study.

</div>

APPENDIX E INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR MENTOR PARTICIPANTS

Circle all that apply:

1. What times are you available to meet with your mentee?
   Before school   Lunch   Prep   After school   Evenings   Weekends

2. What day(s) are you available for mentoring?
   Monday   Tuesday   Wednesday   Thursday   Friday   Saturday   Sunday

3. What is your preferred form of contact?
   Face to face   Phone   E-mail   Other

4. What is your content area of specialization?
   Grade(s) _____
   Content area(s) _____
   Specialization _____

5. What grade levels have you taught? (**Check all that apply**)
   __Primary   __Middle School   __6-8   __9-12   __College

6. How much time do you commit to mentoring each week?
   Less than one hour   one hour   2 hours   as much time as needed

7. Please share what you know about the formal mentoring process.

8. What factors do you believe should be considered in the mentoring process?

9. Describe the support you receive as a mentor from school leaders, in the school of your mentee(s)

10. Can you please describe your relationship with your mentee(s)?

11. What practices have you found to be successful in your mentoring process?

12. If your mentoring process with your mentor was in need of improvement, what recommendations would you suggest for improvement?

13. Is there anything else you would like to add on this topic?

APPENDIX F RESEARCHER'S FIELDNOTE FROM MENTOR AND MENTEE OBSERVATIONS- DESCRIPTIVE AND REFLECTIVE NOTES

Classroom Observation Report

Participant: _____   **Date:** _____
Subject: _____   **Grade:** _____

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

APPENDIX G MENTOR MARY'S MENTOR/MENTEE CONFERENCE LOG

Mary S.

Educational Consultant

<div align="center">

Mentor-Mentee Conference Log

</div>

School: _____   *Date:* _____

Teacher: _____   *Grade:* __

Subject: _____

Conference Number: _____

In order to help you to

1. Topics Covered:

2. What's Working:

3. Areas in Need of Growth:

4. Teacher's Next Steps Based on Consultant's Helpful Hints:

5. Consultant's Next Steps:

Next Meeting Date:

APPENDIX H SAMPLE MENTOR'S OBSERVATION REPORT

First University

The School of Education

<u>**New York City Teaching Fellows/ Partner Teacher Program**</u>

Education Building - Albert Hall – 4th Floor * 718-123.4567 *

Monthly University Field Consultant Log of Assistance

Date of Visit:

University Consultant	R. Williams
Teaching Fellow/ AERP Name	Ellen P.
Program Status	*First Year* ■ *Second Year* ☐
Consultant Visit	*#1 #2 #3 #4* *Please Note: Visits three (3) and four (4) are applicable to only first-year students in the program.*
Teacher's Assignment	*English* *Subject: ELA* *Grade: 7*
School Name and Room	*Grayson School for Young Men*
Mentor Name	*Ms. D. Burrows*

How regularly is the mentor meeting with the teacher? weekly

Did you meet with school Mentor?   No   With Principal/Supervisor   Yes

----

DATE:

Dear Ms. P,

On ***Thursday, DATE***, I had the pleasure of observing your period 2 ELA 7th grade class.

I observed the following:

Learning Target: IWBAT learn about the history around *Roll of Thunder, Hear Me Cry*, (Mildred D. Taylor, author) by inspecting and discussing relics from the 1940s in a Time Capsule reveal.

Do Now: What is the difference between Historic Fiction and Nonfiction?

After students entered the classroom, took their seats, and prepared to work, you greeted them with "Good Morning Teal. You have five minutes to complete the Do Now activity". As students worked on the activity, you took attendance as you circulated.

Next, you stated, "we have several vocabulary words associated with our lesson today that you will need to know. You projected each word on the board and elicited responses:

- Time capsule
- News Article
- Relic
- Racial Climate

You instructed everyone to copy the definition of each term from the board on their graphic organizer. Next, you informed students that on your recent visit to South Carolina during the Christmas break you found a time capsule. You explained that time capsules contain items from the past. Next, you asked students to think about creating their own time capsule and what items they would put into it. You began by showing them a box and saying, "this time capsule contains items from the period of 1930 through 1950. That's around the same time as *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* takes place. Knowing what you know about the story, what can you infer about the items that might be in this box?" Eight students offer responses: a radio, a toy, a book,

Next, you instruct students to sit in their groups. After students move to their groups you inform them of the instructions for the activity, "we will look at artifacts from our time capsule. Each artifact is numbered and is rotated from group to group. Each group will handle the item carefully, discuss what it is, why it is significant to our story, and then write your answer on your worksheets." You then asked a student to paraphrase the instructions. After checking for understanding, you said, "I will model how we will discuss each item using the guided questions on your worksheet, for example here is a

"White only' sign. I will see this and examine it for a minute to gather my thoughts." You informed students that this is how it would be stated on the state assessment.

"Next, I will identify this item, describe it, and discuss how it relates to our reading. Finally, you will make an inference and state why this item is in this time capsule. As an example, "This sign infers that during the 1940's in the South not all races were welcome in specific places.", you stated. You added, "when you hear the signal, one person from your group will hand the item to the next group. Next, you placed a different item from the time capsule on each group table and instructed students to begin. The items included the following:

1. Drinking Fountain Sign ("Whites Only")
2. Photo of Protesters
3. Article dated 1940
4. KKK Membership Card
5. Journal Entry from an African American Teen (dated 1940)

As students worked in their groups you circulated to listen in and guide the group discussions. You reminded students to be respectful of thoughts and opinions and to use group voice. In addition, you reminded students that each item would be timed and must be passed on at the signal. After each signal, each item was passed to the next group in rotation: clockwise. You reminded students to remember the appropriate group voice level.

After all rotations, you stated, "Now we will share out our discussion responses. Each group was called on to share one item. Other groups were encouraged to comment. After each group shared, you asked for any additional comments. Finally, you asked, "Do you think it is important to keep items like this and why? Students eagerly responded and shared that they as well as their parents kept items to remember the past such as photos, clothing, toys, beepers, records, etc.

You then instructed students to complete their exit slips and evaluate the activity by first writing each group members name on the sheet, next evaluating each member's participation by rating from 1 to 3 (1= little or no participation; 2. Some participation and 3. Very participatory; and finally answer: How well your group worked together in a few sentences.

Aspects of effective teaching that promoted improved student learning: (*components of the Danielson Rubric which are used as a rating by the New York City Department of Education)

Commendations:
- You are providing your students with age and subject appropriate materials and resources that address the New York State ELA Learning Standards for grade 7, i.e., You provide your students with visuals, graphic organizers, and opportunities to listen, read, write, and speak to accommodate and stimulate all learning

modalities (***Domain 1c: Setting Instructional Outcomes by providing suitable materials and strategies for your diverse learners.***)

- This lesson, addressed reading, listening, and writing skills with a clear structure serving to scaffold information that challenged your students' thinking and supported their understanding (***Domain 1e: Designed Coherent Instruction to actively engage students and advance them through the content***) You informed your students that today's lesson would focus on making inferences of artifacts from a time capsule. Students would work in groups to identify, describe, and discuss the significance of each item and how it related to the novel.
- You are demonstrating improved classroom management skills. You provide students with clear group instructions, check for understanding and finally encourage students to work together. In addition, you encourage students to self-reflect and evaluate their work as a group and as individuals. This activity coveys the importance of accountability in their learning ***(Domain 2b: Establishing a Culture of Learning)***
- Your Exit Slips serve as an appropriate activity that engages students in learning and provides you with an assessment of group work***. (Domain 3c: Engaging students in Learning)***

Recommendations going forward:

- In our debriefing session afterwards, it was recommended that you consider more discussion time for group and class discussion. You even stated that this could have been a two-day lesson where an extension of the lesson, students would bring in sample artifacts from home to share. You would provide an outline of dos and don'ts of appropriate artifacts for sharing. ***(Domain 2b: Establishing a Culture for Learning – Expectations for Learning and Achievement)***
- We also discussed that you might instruct each group to identify a specific student to pass around the items and comment so that each group member had a chance to participate. You also added that you might consider individual boxes with different items for group presentations. Though this would take more planning, you felt that students could have a richer discussion. ***Domain 3c: Instruction: Engaging Students in Learning***. Scholars would work more closely in groups to prepare a presentation for class sharing and engage in the discussion.
- You suggested that students might create their own time capsules as an end of unit project and present it to the class. This would require planning to explain what would and would not be appropriate to include. In addition, this activity would ensure that all students participate. Students could offer peer- written feedback to enhance their writing skills. (***Domain 3c: Instruction: Engaging Students in Learning***)

Overall, you prepared an engaging lesson. Your lesson plan provided your students with age and content appropriate materials and resources aligned to the Common Core Literacy Standards for grade seven. You are also providing students with meaningful and

appropriate activities for both formative and summative assessments. All students were actively engaged in the lesson activities. In our discussion afterwards, you informed me that the next day's lesson objective would focus on finishing the time capsule discussion and making connections with the novel.

During my next visit, I would like to see any activities/opportunities that you could provide for your students to show creativity in their learning of this topic, e.g., create their own time capsule and explain the significance of each item and share it in class. This would provide all students with an opportunity to be creative and advance their cognitive abilities.

Continue your work with your on-site mentor as you look to address learning strategies for all students. During my next visit, I hope to meet with your school mentor. Please review the commendations and recommendations outlined in this report and contact me by text or email with any concerns and/or questions. I look forward to my next visit. ***Keep up the good work!***

Sincerely,
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